

LIMBAJELE SPECIALIZATE  
ÎN CONTEXTUL NOILOR MEDII DE ÎNVĂȚARE:  
PROVOCĂRI ȘI OPORTUNITĂȚI



Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate  
al Universității Babeș-Bolyai

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# **Limbajele specializate în contextul noilor medii de învățare:**

*Provocări și oportunități*

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## Cuvânt înainte

Deja intrată în a doua decadă de existență, conferința internațională *Dinamica limbajelor de specialitate: Tehnici și strategii inovatoare* (ediția XI, 2020), organizată de Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate al Facultății de Litere (DLSS), Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca, și-a propus ca și în acest an să îi reunească pe toți cei care pot contribui la dezvoltarea domeniului limbilor străine pentru scopuri specifice. Într-o perioadă inedită, marcată de pandemie și de trecerea în mediul virtual a majorității activităților didactice și de cercetare, scopul nostru a fost acela de a aduce împreună cât mai multe cadre didactice, studenți, doctoranzi, cercetători și specialiști în domenii diverse, din țară și din străinătate, în vederea unui schimb fertil de idei cu privire la evoluțiile și provocările disciplinare înregistrate în contextul pandemiei, al progresului tehnologic, al competențelor multiple necesare pe piața muncii și al unei înnoiri a paradigmei educaționale. Organizată în acest an exclusiv online, conferința noastră a izbutit să ofere participanților o platformă interdisciplinară pentru expunerea celor mai recente direcții de cercetare în zone de analiză variate.

Multe dintre lucrările prezentate la această ediție a XI-a a conferinței internaționale a departamentului nostru și selectate pentru publicare abordează, astfel, cele mai noi teorii și metode de predare-învățare și de cercetare care pot fi implementate și în mediul online, modalitățile de transpunere a materialelor de curs deja existente în materiale pentru predarea online, provocările cu care se confrunta profesorii, cercetătorii și studenții în această situație inedită, aspecte legate de dinamica accelerată a schimbărilor de pe piața muncii, care determină modificări în profilul de învățare al noilor generații. În plus, în acest an, ne-am bucurat de un număr mare de contribuții venite din partea studenților, cărora le-a și fost dedicată o întreagă secțiune.

Astfel, materialele din volumul de față, scrise în limbile engleză, spaniolă și română, au fost organizate în patru secțiuni: *I. Didactica și metodică predării limbajelor de specialitate în contextul noilor medii de predare-învățare*, *II. Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate*, *III. Lingvistică teoretică și aplicată*, *IV. Contribuții studențești*. Aceste secțiuni



evidențiază tematicile abordate de autori și oferă cititorilor posibilitatea să acceseze cu ușurință articolele care se pliază pe sferele lor de interes.

Contribuțiile din acest an fac încă o dată dovada faptului că, indiferent de obstacolele care pot apărea, demersurile colaborative interdisciplinare, interculturale și transfrontaliere sunt posibile și reprezintă fundamentul dezvoltării în cercetarea științifică și în îmbunătățirea metodelor de predare în domeniul limbilor străine.

***Editorii***

***I. Didactica și metodică predării limbajelor  
de specialitate în contextul noilor medii  
de predare-învățare***



# **‘Online on a Dime’ – Reactions, Challenges and Potential Benefits for Teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes in Higher Education**

**CRISTINA FELEA<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract.** The abrupt transition from face-to-face to online teaching (‘online on a dime’) triggered by the Coronavirus outbreak has affected teachers in different ways, depending on many factors, including their teaching and communication experience in the digital environment, compatibility with their professional interests and goals, perceived complexity of the task and resistance to change, the ability to see the potential benefits of this experience, etc. Presently, the sheer amount and variety of data coming in globally from online discussions (forums, social media, major publications, etc.) documenting this ongoing experiment can be daunting. However, there are certain common aspects that the author will use to conduct a small-scale study on a group of teachers of English for Specific Academic Purposes at a higher education institution in Romania. The main purpose is to identify some of the main challenges, potential benefits and possible mid- and long-term solutions. It will do so by applying a questionnaire to explore academics’ attitudes in relation to the impact of technology on their discipline and teaching approaches. The findings are expected to contribute to the wider discussion on digital language education and technology adoption in teaching, learning and research.

**Keywords:** *online teaching, English for Specific Academic Purposes, Covid-19 pandemic, technology integration.*

## **Introduction**

### ***Online on a Dime – The Abrupt Transition to Online Teaching During Pandemic Lockdown***

For the past two decades the impact of technology on language education has been increasingly documented in a variety of empirical and exploratory studies in close relation with the dramatic social and economic changes triggered by the Information and Communication Technologies (Parmaxi & Zaphiris, 2017; Dashtestani & Stojkovic, 2016; Cong-Lem, 2018). The European Higher Education Modernisation Agenda (2011,

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renewed in 2017) and the more recent Digital Education Action Plan emphasize Europe's resolve to cater for and prepare "citizens for an increasingly interconnected, globalised future by investing in the skills and competences required to thrive and positively engage in society in the digital age" (Digital Education Action Plan (2018-2020)). However, all the efforts to align education with societal advances and "prepare the academy for the learner of tomorrow" (Hartman, Moskal, & Dziuban, 2005) now need to be reconsidered in the light of the complex situation generated by the coronavirus pandemics. The Covid-19 outbreak has had effects on world economy, which could impact HE in many ways because of its position at the heart of contemporary society (Tripathi & Amann, 2020; Martin-Barbero, 2020).

Without warning and almost overnight, higher education (and not only) has embarked on a large-scale experiment in online learning (Zimmerman, 2020). Undoubtedly, this is a difficult time, with many challenges for both students and teachers. The abrupt transition from face-to-face to online teaching has affected teachers in different ways, depending on many factors, including their teaching / communication experience in the digital environment, compatibility with their professional interests and goals, perceived complexity, and the ability to see the potential benefits of this experience.

So far and as expected, the literature on the topic has been mainly reactive, illustrating the immediate response the education system has given to the shift to remote/ distance/ online teaching and learning. Grey literature, desktop research, policy papers dealing with macro-concerns and exploratory surveys cover mostly the degree of preparedness of institutions and teachers on multiple dimensions ranging from technical and pedagogical to emotional well-being (See Giovannella, Passarelli & Persico, 2020, for a brief literature review).

These studies describe/ formulate some of the themes that are likely to be investigated in the future as the amount of data accumulates. An important issue discussed at this time is the way an emergency crisis response can affect the understanding and practice of distance education as defined and conceptualized in the past decades (Hodges & al., 2020). A call for taxonomy clarification and in-depth analyses was/is deemed necessary in order to prevent educational institutions and actors from associating the move to online environment without "stopping learning" (Zhang, Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2020), which has been called remote learning/ teaching, "temporary distance education", "emergency remote learning", with the online learning/ teaching alternative. The latter has been studied and documented by educational technologists for many years, generating an increasing body of evidence that support its strengths and limitations.

This “crisis-prompted” rapid shift can be seen, in a positive approach, as a “catalyst for change”, an opportunity to reflect on the nature of educational ecosystems” (Giovannella, Passarelli & Persico, 2020). However, while technology affordances, sharing and participating in learning/professional communities, initially seemed to be of immediate help in continuing the instruction during the pandemics, issues such as inequality of access, physical and emotional fatigue, lack of appropriate coordination, resources and competences have since emphasized the weaknesses of educational systems in terms of preparedness to face emergency-driven situations.

The present study is an attempt to provide a stop-frame picture of the experience of a group of teachers of foreign languages for specific purposes during the pandemic lockdown and immediately after. To better frame it, a brief description of some discipline-specific features relevant to our study will be presented.

### ***Teaching ESAP in a Digital World***

The author has been involved in teaching and researching English for specific academic purposes (ESAP) at the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes (Babes-Bolyai University) for 25 years, focussing mostly on the synchronization of the local curriculum and of the teaching approach with the dynamics of European higher education and the technological advances affecting education and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This journey has meant a permanent inquiry into the nature of the discipline and a reassessment of its status within academia, and of the best ways to cater for the changing needs of the students. Defined as a “practitioners’ movement devoted to establishing, through careful research, the needs and relevant discourse features for a targeted group of students” (Johns, 2013), ESAP teaching started in sync to language-centred approaches but, in time, the field has revealed its protean nature and evolved into a typically interdisciplinary field, where teaching and learning it may be considered from a decentred perspective (Felea, 2014) in order to cater for new literacies developing as a result of technological affordances and of the networked society. Miller proposed a “multi-literacies framework” aimed at reconceptualising EAP, by embedding six dimensions of the “broader academic context”:

*Institutional*: understanding, navigating and communicating within the university system.

*Digital*: understanding, using, and communicating with multimedia technology.

*Socio-cultural*: understanding and relating to people and cultures.

*Critical*: understanding and manipulating texts, discourses, genres, and practices.

*Language*: understanding the mechanics of and producing written and spoken texts.

*Academic*: understanding and producing academic texts, adhering to those conventions (Miller, 2015)

This is further confirmed by the results of Roche (2017), who demonstrated that students who enter higher education with a fair level of digital literacy perform better in terms of academic skills. In a study on IT and language proficiency as predictors of online participation, the authors demonstrated that the embedding of digital and media literacy competences as cross-curricular competences improved students' learning outcomes (Felea & Stanca, 2013). In their turn, teachers are also expected to be equipped “with the ability to manage, comprehend, assess, share and communicate information using digital technology and interact in the digital world safely” and it is their attitude towards technology use which has an important effect on the implementation of technology-enhanced learning environments (Hartman, Moskal, & Dziuban, 2005). Since 2013, when the *DIGOMP: A framework for developing and understanding digital competence in Europe* was published, higher education institutions have developed their own implementation strategies with a view to empowering students and ensure education equity (Yuan, Wang, & Eagle, 2019).

This change brings about the need to update curricular decisions on a regular basis and, at present, to consider digital literacy/ digital competence as a basic requirement for successful teaching and learning in higher education and beyond.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Research Objective and Method***

Future institutional evaluation and analyses of this real-life experiment will no doubt be able to draw on large data sets and comprehensive surveys but also on small-scale studies like the present one, which aims to identify some of the main challenges, potential benefits and possible mid- and long term solutions in relation to the experience of a group of academics teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes at Babes-Bolyai University (BBU) in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

The main ideas tackled in this study draw on desktop research and a department workshop dedicated to knowledge/ experience sharing and professional community-building held in July 2020, immediately after the end of the academic semester. The ensuing collaborative materials and Zoom

recording were used to extract the common themes emerging from the experience to online transition and its impact on teaching our discipline.

As a follow-up, a questionnaire consisting of closed and open questions was designed and distributed to the department members. It was structured to collect responses on the following main questions:

1. How ready/ prepared did the teachers feel/ consider themselves, their students and the institution during and immediately after the lockdown?
2. What changes do teachers report on the (possible) impact of technology use and online teaching/learning on their teaching approaches and the discipline of languages for specific academic purposes?
3. What are their main expectations for the (immediate and long-term) future?

The results are expected to contribute to the growing body of studies on the present-day challenges encountered by the educational systems world-wide by focussing on a small group of professionals in the field of languages for specific purposes.

## ***Findings and Discussion***

### **A. Readiness of the Learning Environment – Teachers’ Reactions and Attitudes During and After Lockdown**

#### **Demographics**

Out of the 22 participants to the study, 81% were female and 19% were male. Most of them (77.2%) were aged between 23 and 45, and 22.6% over 46, with similar figures in terms of seniority in higher education: 72.7% had taught between 7 and 15+ years, with only 27.3% having taught between 1 and 6 years. All of them had experience in teaching undergraduate students, almost 50% in teaching MA and doctoral students; 32% had taught in distance learning. This profile indicates a high level of professional experience, which indicates that their answers may give valuable information for the purpose of this study.

#### **Self-reported expertise, use of and attitude to technology in teaching *before* the lockdown**

Most participants (68.2%) reported medium proficiency in using digital technology and about a third (27%) advanced proficiency. All of them had used technology in teaching.

Teachers were asked to mention some modalities in which they used technology and their frequency. The highest figures indicated that they used regularly email for communicating with students (81%), posted resources (compulsory and optional) for their course/seminar (77%) and used online



communication for administrative/ course management purposes (59%). On the other hand, only 40% reported using messenger, forums and social media for communication purposes, 35% used interactive exercises, questionnaires and online evaluation and even less used web 2.0 tools such as blogs (personal or teaching). All these point to the fact that, before the lockdown, technology use was still in its early stages and suggest little interest for its communicative, interactive, creative and collaborative dimensions.

Additionally, only half of the participants believed that technology integration is important and very important for student motivation and engagement in the learning process (50%) and for professional development (60%). Their reports on how comfortable they felt using technology are distributed almost evenly among 'I feel comfortable with and use technology with ease' (36.4%), 'I encourage students to use it (31.8%)' and 'I use technology as an optional instrument' (31.8%). Corroborated with the recorded workshop discussion, this further suggests that technology was still considered a supplement, used for the facilities offered in the area of course and activity management, in line with a traditional static and transmissive model of teaching rather than a dynamic, learner-centred, inquiry-based one, promoted within the social and constructivist approaches characteristic to technology-rich learning environments (Arnó Macià, 2012).

### **Self-reported reactions and attitudes to technology-related issues during and immediately after lockdown**

During the workshop and in the questionnaire, teachers were asked to mention 3 important words describing their feelings towards the abrupt transition to online teaching (Figure 1) and what they mostly missed during the lockdown (Figure 2).

The occurrence of words describing **positive emotional reactions** (27) were: *challenged* (12 times), *curious/ intrigued* (4 times), *glad/enthusiastic/ content/energized* (5 times), followed by those used only once (*vigilant, hopeful, active, creative, calm, determined*). The **negative reactions** were described in slightly less words (25): *worried* (10 times), *irritated/ annoyed/ frustrated* (6 times), *overwhelmed/ abandoned* (4 times), followed by words used once but representing similar emotions (disoriented, confused, uncomfortable, resigned, pushed).

Most teachers reported **having missed** the human dimension of the physical classroom: the *interaction, face-to-face communication, students' feedback, group work, conversations with students and colleagues during breaks, etc.*, which also account for the general prevailing mood characterising the quarantine period.



**Fig. 1.** Word cloud of answers to 'How did you feel?'



**Fig. 2.** Word cloud of answers to ‘What I missed most...’

This emotional picture was supported by the participants' free comments on their **behaviour**. Most of them *tried to* (understand students' needs, use tools they were comfortable with, identify the best options, see the positive aspects, maintain the quality of the educational act, etc.) and *adapt/adjust* (to the new situation and help students adapt too, existing materials to online conditions). Some of these also mentioned having discovered the *benefits* of online teaching strategies and tools (for example, the possibility to personalise teaching) and their *determination* to develop professionally so as to perform at higher standards (attending webinars and ICT training sessions) and avoid fatigue and work overload. A few mentioned having felt *overwhelmed*, *annoyed*, *frustrated*, *irritated* by the lack of control of the course, particularly of the evaluation. All in all, the picture seems to convey a balanced approach to an extraordinary situation.

Similarly, in terms of their **students' reactions/behaviour**, about half of the participants reported that they adjusted rapidly to the new situation; they were *enthusiastic, curious, open* to novel methods and were *prompt to embrace* the new learning environment. An equal number of answers signalled that students felt *scared/overwhelmed/ tired/ stressed* by the workload and by the fact that their teachers used *too many different platforms* to deliver the courses.

**Institutional response to the crisis:** at macro-level most participants felt abandoned and emphasized the lack of preparedness in terms of decision-making and management/coordination, lack of infrastructure and support for teacher training (*my institution was late to react, was not present, left us to our own devices, proposed unrealistic solutions, digitalization is in its infancy in our university*); on the other hand, mostly at department level, the participants were unanimous in appreciating the efforts put into building a community of practice so as to cope with the stress and unpredictability of the situation and to maximize teaching efficiency in the online environment (*the head of department managed well the situation and offered what support they could to reduce stress, we were offered useful advice and excellent suggestions, I felt part of a community of practice, which was and is very useful*).

### **Stop and think: ‘emergency’ SWOT analysis**

The questionnaire continued with a group of questions aimed at building a “still picture” of the immediate aftermath of a completely online semester by using SWOT analysis. For each component of the analysis the participants were given a short list of examples (collected from their answers during the workshop and corroborated with similar items found in grey literature/ exploratory research published since the pandemic outbreak) and were asked to say how important they considered them. Then, free comments were asked to add, supplementary information, if deemed necessary.

In terms of **strengths**, all participants agreed that *Developing new competences for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, *Experimenting with new methods*, and *Adapting to online teaching* are important and very important; the options for *Flexibility of the work program* were distributed along the scale but a great majority also appreciated this aspect as strength. The 16 comments included some variations/details on the fixed items and helpful hints as to participants’ overall positive attitude to this experience: *developing creativity, adaptability, flexibility, rational, positive thinking, resilience, greater learning autonomy for students, adaptability to a new situation, ability to successfully mobilize and maintain pace under conditions of stress and pressure, improving existing teaching materials, and identifying the right tools, the transition to activities that develop students’ learning autonomy, experimenting with new efficient assessment methods, in order to minimize the possibility of plagiarism, against the context of end-of-the-year complex language proficiency testing, working from home, many options to improve and diversify teaching by access to varied tools, sharing the expertise and experience with colleagues.*

In terms of **weaknesses**, two items showed relative agreement: *Lack of infrastructure adapted to online teaching* (81% chose important and very important) and *Lack of (prior) teacher training for online teaching* (63% chose important and very important). Similar responses (63%-68%) were given to the items *Lack of teachers’ respectively students’ digital competences* and *Lack of strategy and coordination institution-teachers-students*. Only 12 comments were recorded and most of them showed concerns/ worries in relation to: students and teacher-student relationships (*lack of interest/ motivation, reluctance to switch to online teaching, the absence of physical interaction*), time management (*more time needed for course preparation and tutoring and assessment*) correlated with health issues (*rapid depletion of physical and mental resources*), and perceived lack of support in case of technical problems (*lack of alternatives if the net fails or the software doesn't work*).

In relation to **opportunities**, ranking high in participants' options for important and very important were *Flexibility and diversity of teaching strategies* and *Developing alternative formats for teaching/ delivering and assessing students* (86-88%). The next opportunity appreciated by a large majority of participants was *Collaborating with other teachers/ colleagues and building a community of practice* (77%). *Getting to know better students' learning habits/ styles* and *Saving time and resources* seemed to be important and very important for 60% of the teachers. The 11 comments added some new aspects, such as the chance to participate to the *change of the educational paradigm*; to *reflect on the teaching content in terms of the communication "medium"*.

Finally, in terms of **threats**, participants seem extremely concerned by issues related to *Unequal access to technology and subsequent social inequity* (95%) and *Assessment ethics* (90%). Ranking similarly high in their options (81%) are the items *Lack of legal provisions adapted to the new realities*, *Lack of support for developing e-learning (financial, technical, didactic)*, and the *Danger of burnout*. The *Resistance to change (of the institution and teaching staff)* does not seem to worry so much (63%). The 10 comments generally reiterated some of the concerns mentioned under weaknesses, with a focus on emotional aspects that may affect the motivation and even the well-being of parties involved in the learning process: *the feeling of isolation and anxiety experienced by some teachers, who feel overwhelmed by the situation; my inability to check / process all materials made available online to students from where and some errors; lack of student motivation, numbness, uncertainty reflected in the uncertainty of the academic environment; the monotony / specificity of online activities greatly limits the motivation and enthusiasm to communicate, which is the essence of and the purpose of learning foreign languages; lack of real, empathic contact between students-teachers; teachers-teachers*.

Teachers' answers pointed out several problems such as (lack of) access to technology and technical/ pedagogical resources, support, professional training; resistance to change; even technophobia. Their concern for the quality of the educational/ learning process matches the general consensus that teaching and learning should be priorities as it is well-known that "academic content does not become better just for being saved in a LMS" (Martin-Barbero, 2020).

## **B. Changes in teachers' behaviour in relation to technologies and on-line learning and their expectations for the future**

The last part of the questionnaire aimed to identify (a) behaviours and opinions in relation to technology use during the lockdown and (b) teachers' expectations in terms of institutional and professional change.

When asked how often they used a series of tools for course preparation, teaching, projects and for communication/collaboration with students/ colleagues, the answers were as follows: for communication purposes, most of them regularly used email (86%) but, in contrast with the period before the lockdown, they reported increased use of social media (50%) and instant message chat (45%), which may indicate the need to compensate for lack of physical presence/interaction. The almost unanimous use of video conferences (90%) may also point out to the desire to replicate the face-to-face environment. In terms of content production and sharing, teachers used PowerPoint presentations and Word documents (50%), downloadable digital content (72%), supplementary resources (63%) and virtual libraries (27%). These figures indicate a *significant increase in technology-enhanced teaching*, which is supported by the higher percentage of persons using learning management systems for organizational and administrative purposes (40%).

The following questions tackled the issues of institutional resources. Almost all (90%) agree that *Better use of ICT in our institution would be appropriate at this stage* but they do not seem to see that the university *Has a policy of promoting the technology used in the teaching / learning process* (only less than half agree on this). Not a lot of activities were offered for *professional development / development in the field of teaching in higher education* except department seminars and sharing experience with colleagues. Consequently, participants suggest other ways to support teachers in integrating ICT into teaching: a large majority agreed on *Setting up a resource and counselling / training centre for online education/e-learning* (82%), *Creating training tools available online on the faculty website* (73%), and *Hiring technology experts from outside the institution such as specialists in the administration and management of e-learning resources, specialists in instructional design, etc.*(64%). A little more than half agreed on various measures that would contribute to their professional development, such as: *Organizing training courses three or more times a year; Creating a group of experts among the teachers of the institution to develop professional development policies in order to integrate ICT in the teaching process; Creating a community of practice at the level of faculty departments; Intensive courses when new technologies are introduced.*

Teachers' need to improve professionally is closely related to the dynamic needs of their students. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are seen as vital for academic and career success (86.3%) while learning and using ICTs would improve students' academic and professional chances (91%). There seems to be almost unanimity among participants as to the competences/skills required to navigate the increasingly complex world dominated by technology. Thus, over 86% strongly agree that the

most important 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are *Collaboration and inter-personal skills; Identifying, formulating and solving problems; Self-training through research and practical experience; Selection of information and media skills; Critical thinking and systemic thinking; Creativity and intellectual curiosity; Communication skills; Responsibility and ability to adapt to the new (flexibility).*

All these also signal a need to shift the teaching approach, with teachers becoming learning facilitators, true “agents of change.” Their new expertise involves multiliteracies, which they are expected to use for transforming classroom practices according to the multidimensional changes brought about by technologies (Lund, 2004). The openness and participatory dimensions of the new networked society require a “new pedagogy” to “engage learners in apprenticeship for different kinds of knowledge practice, new processes of inquiry, dialogue, and connectivity” (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008). When asked if they consider a curriculum change opportune, 50% of the respondents answered yes, 20% answered no, and 30% did not know. Their choices were further detailed in free comments that seem to **acknowledge** that curriculum needs reconsidering (it is *slightly outdated and adapted to face-to-face teaching, it should probably adapted to online courses; A syllabus built on needs analysis always has a digital component considering the times we live in; Yes, in the sense of creating new skills that were not targeted until now*) and **illustrate awareness** that technology, online teaching in particular, impacts teaching practice (*we can increase the individual study time allocated by the student: students can study different sources indicated by us and online courses can be moments of reflection, debate, clarification, deepening; Online time units are shorter and students need to take on more independent learning; Given that we remain teaching exclusively online, only synchronous teaching is no longer possible*). On the other hand, some of the participants **do not seem ready to accept** the deep change brought about by technology as it is documented in the specialist literature (*The relationship between content and means is not the issue; Even in an increasingly technological society, I do not know to what extent ICT is necessarily an approach that will give better results, but I understand that this is the direction we are heading; From my point of view, online teaching is only a momentary solution and involves only a change of teaching / learning methods and not of the whole curriculum*).

This latter position seems, however, to be contradicted by the answers to more specific questions on which transversal competencies they thought should be integrated into the curriculum and teaching of specialized languages and how important some of these are in teaching specialized languages. The highest ranking items for integration into the curriculum were *Searching, evaluating and interpreting information online* and *Ability to respect ethics in a digital context* (86%), followed by *Research skills* (72%),

*Ability to create and communicate information online* and *Learning management* (68%). While only 50% thought *Basic digital competences* should be integrated, 90% considered them important for teaching specialized languages, similar to all the other items on which between 85 and 90% agreed.

## Conclusions

The present study aimed to describe some aspects related to the abrupt transition to online teaching due to Covid-19 pandemic as experienced by a group of teachers of languages for specific academic purposes from a Romanian university. The quantitative and qualitative analysis, though small-scale, revealed some elements that are similar to world-wide teachers' experience, as described in recent studies on technology impact.

Many researchers agree that taxonomy clarifications are needed in order to avoid associating this "crisis-prompted" shift to online teaching with the online teaching alternative. In our case, this confusion may also draw on the use and attitude to technology prior to the lockdown, which indicates that technology adoption was in its early stages, with teachers showing little interest especially for its interactive and collaborative dimensions. The answers suggest that technology was used mostly as a supplement, without being embedded in what is generally considered a paradigm shift to approaches more adequate to 21<sup>st</sup> century educational landscape (Warschauer & Healey, 1998).

The emotional reactions and attitudes during and immediately after the lockdown may generally draw on the personal lack of control and uncertainties characteristic of the crisis but also on the institutional lack of preparedness in terms of rapid response and support.

In the brief SWOT analysis of the transition period, participants to our study seem to acknowledge the potential of digital teaching/ learning as a "catalyst for change" (Giovannella, Passarelli & Persico, 2020) by mentioning aspects such as developing new competences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (learner autonomy, flexibility, chance to reflect on content in terms of communication medium, building a community of practice by sharing and collaborating with colleagues), experimenting with new methods and adapting to online teaching.

On the other hand, participants expressed their concerns in relation to the weaknesses of the educational system such as lack of adequate (teacher and student) competences, institutional support and to the threats regarding unequal access to technology and subsequent social inequity.

Regarding the changes in teachers' behaviours/opinions, results show not only an increase in technology use but also a deeper understanding of the ways technology may impact teaching practice in their own field, acknowledging the

need to adapt curriculum so as to include multiple literacies needed by students to perform better in the knowledge and networked society, an aspect supported by various authors.

While the present research is limited due to its small number of participants and method of analysis (mostly quantitative), the findings are similar with other studies dealing with technology integration. Further studies are needed to investigate the paradigm shift in academic and specific language education, especially in relation to curricular changes that are needed in order to cover new (mostly transversal) skills, multiple literacies (digital, media, etc.) and emerging genres in this rapid-changing, dynamic context.

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# From Face to Face to Interface: Moving an ESAP Practical Course Online in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Babeş-Bolyai University, like many other educational institutions, suspended face-to-face classes in March 2020. As a consequence, immediate measures to ensure the continuation of the instructional activity had to be taken. Switching to online classes was adopted first as a short-term solution, then, due to the accelerating spread of the coronavirus worldwide, it was maintained throughout the spring semester, examination session included. Transitioning to the online teaching and learning environment posed considerable challenges. In addition to transcending the limitations inherent to computer-mediated communication – whether synchronous or asynchronous –, teachers had to find ways to adjust methodologies, syllabi and teaching aids and materials to the new instructional situation. This paper presents the various steps and procedures used to move an ESAP practical course online. Essentially, it consists of reflections on the transition from face-to-face communication in a physical classroom to interaction in virtual reality mediated by machine interface (hardware and software).

**Keywords:** *face-to-face teaching, computer-mediated teaching, online classes, English for Specific Academic Purposes, transition.*

## Introduction

The rapid global spread of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 led to school closures around the world. In this context, Babeş-Bolyai University suspended face-to-face classes in March 2020, which involved switching the instructional activity to online classes. This article presents the transitional process through which an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) practical course was moved online. It focuses on aspects such as peculiarities of online teaching and learning, opening and maintaining new channels of communication between teacher and students, adapting teaching materials to the new learning environment and conducting online examination.

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The course attendants were approximately 300 first-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeș-Bolyai University, whose instruction in English is structured as a two-semester 56-hour practical course. The acquisition of specialist vocabulary and the introduction to English for Academic Purposes are the two underpinnings of the course, which places it in the domain of ESAP. The second semester syllabus comprises the study of terminology specific to five sports: football, gymnastics, athletics, swimming and tennis, with special emphasis on vocabulary designating abilities, skills, actions, movements, techniques, rules and regulations, pieces of equipment, sporting events, markings, areas and branches. The syllabus also contains elements of academic writing such as paraphrasing, summarising and essay writing.

### **Some peculiarities of online teaching and learning**

Online teaching/learning is first and foremost a form of Computer-Mediated-Communication. Therefore, the fundamental differences between face-to-face and online teaching/learning are the very same that distinguish face-to-face communication from Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). First of all, the context of communication is different. From a physical perspective, participants in face-to-face communication share essentially the same physical space while people engaged in CMC can be very close to each other or separated by vast distances. From a temporal viewpoint, face-to-face communication is always synchronous whereas CMC can be both synchronous and asynchronous. Secondly, the two types of communication differ in terms of channels. In face-to-face communication all senses participate in sending and receiving messages. In contrast, CMC relies solely on sight (text, photos and videos) and hearing. Furthermore, while in face-to-face communication meaning can be exchanged via a variety of verbal and nonverbal messages, in CMC words, photos, videos and audio messages are used. (DeVito, 2012, p.7)

Another characteristic of online teaching/learning is the permanent existence of an interface between man and machine and, therefore, between all the participants:

all resources have to be accessed via the computer medium (with the help of hardware such as keyboard, mouse or screen, and of soft-ware); and they are delineated by its possibilities (by features such as frames, hot buttons, pop-up menus, voting buttons, clickable options, push-to-talk devices) (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 37).

Thus, the constraints and affordances of this medium should be essential factors to be taken into account when designing materials for online teaching. In these conditions, moving a course online does not involve

copying its content into an online format but “adapting it to use some of the tools available in the new environment and taking advantage of some of the capabilities offered by online” (Ko & Rossen, 2017, p. 57).

In addition to becoming familiar with the limitations, opportunities and facilities specific to the online environment, teachers should consider the human factor involved in instructional activities; in other words, they should be aware of some unpleasant experiences learners might go through. Anxiety, which can hinder learning, might affect online learners for various reasons. For example, learning a language in the absence of some cues specific to the face-to-face setting (vocal intonations and body language) may induce anxiety (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 80). Furthermore, “at a cognitive level, insufficient familiarity with the tools being used may cause techno-stress and cognitive overload, especially when technical challenges that overstretch learners are coupled with demanding linguistic work” (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 80). Moreover, geographical distance between participants has a social and psychological impact. Sitting in isolation in front of a screen and interacting with the others through the medium of a machine can lead to anxiety. Finally, the sense of greater monitoring and control specific to digital communication can also cause anxiety and have an inhibitory effect (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 81).

An additional point to bear in mind when teaching online is that the new educational environment brings about changes to the traditional role of the instructor (Ko & Rossen, 2017, pp. 38-39). Thus, teachers are expected to act as facilitators and moderators rather than sources of knowledge. Under these circumstances, finding meaningful ways to incorporate the resources available on the internet into courses, emphasizing student collaboration, providing rules and protocols to facilitate learning and offering guidance should be among the top priorities of online teachers. A particular aspect to consider when drafting regulatory procedures is the beneficial effects of structuring the online environment and creating learning spaces:

Virtual learning environments need to be viewed holistically, rather than seen as separate to the general university experience. Students need to be socialized into the significance of different segmented areas and the part that these locations can play in their learning and development. It is vital to create a sense of an ‘online’ place (Bach et al., 2007, p. 98).

## **The transition to the online teaching/learning environment**

As shown above, moving a course online is a complex and demanding process. It is all the more so when it happens unexpectedly. When face-to-face courses were cancelled at Babeș-Bolyai University, teachers were aware

that quick measures had to be taken to ensure the continuation of the instructional activity. Notwithstanding the urgency of the situation, switching from the physical classroom to the online environment was a gradual progression. As far as I am concerned, the transition lasted throughout the semester, from school closure to the last exam I graded.

The first step I took was to contact the students via Facebook. I posted a message on my Facebook page explaining that during the period of class suspension we could not meet face-to-face, so we would work remotely. Students were also informed that once a week the group representatives would receive lessons in PDF format and that they would be responsible for delivering them to their colleagues. The homework was to be sent as an attachment via email to the teacher. This step, though rudimentary, played a very important role in the process of moving to the online learning environment because it opened a line of communication with the students after the closing of school. It gave them the feeling that the teacher was not absent, which motivated them to respond.

The next step was taken a week later when I invited my students to join me on the Edmodo learning platform. They received written instructions on how to create an account and how to join a class. Their prompt reaction was a pleasant surprise: within a few days most students had created accounts and joined their classes. Starting to use Edmodo was a crucial moment in the process of moving the course online. For the first time after the suspension of face-to-face classes, an interface between students and teacher existed. A virtual learning environment had been created. As well as a classroom, Edmodo quickly became the bulletin board of the course. Now students had a space for learning English.

Edmodo's affordances allowed me to diversify the instructional activities. In addition to posting announcements, tutorials and lessons in PDF format, I was able to create assignments and quizzes. The grammar, vocabulary, listening comprehension and reading comprehension exercises already existing in the course packet were transferred to Edmodo as multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true and false and matching exercises. Furthermore, asynchronous discussions triggered by sport-related topics or videos were well-received by students. As students posted their opinions, I was able to provide them with feedback in which I commented on the complexity or clarity of the ideas mentioned, on students' ability to synthesize, to summarise, to identify ideas, to think critically and to process the information. Concerning spelling, grammar and vocabulary errors, I included some suggestions of correct variants. I personalised the comments by using my knowledge of the students' personality, learning style, lifestyle and classroom behaviour to create a feeling of belonging and relevance for my students. For

example, I knew that one of the students was a former professional rhythmic gymnast and I used this detail to compliment her on relating her own experience to that of a gymnast's who delivered a speech in a video. I also remembered that another student would drink his coffee during the English class which had been scheduled on Mondays from 8 o'clock and I also hinted at this. Such small details made all the difference between genuine interaction and teacher-imposed instructional activities. This was a good opportunity to get the students involved in communicating in English and to help them to improve their writing skills.

The third stage in the transition process began when synchronous visual interaction was added to the online environment of the course. While Edmodo proved an efficient and versatile platform, it enabled mostly asynchronous interaction. Soon the need for a tool allowing synchronous interaction became imperative. Both the students and I realized that written communication and explanatory notes, however clear and detailed, could not completely substitute direct spoken communication. Therefore the activities on Edmodo were complemented by meetings hosted by Zoom. 60 minute-meetings were scheduled and only the matters that could not be dealt with through asynchronous communication were addressed.

### **Text and visual representation in online teaching**

During the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, I wrote three types of documents for my students: teaching materials, informative texts (announcements, instructions and tutorials) and end of semester tests. As soon as I started to design lessons for online learning, I became aware that they would have to contain a blend of three elements: the content of the already existing course packet, the information normally displayed on the whiteboard during a regular face-to-face lesson and the contribution of the teacher as a multitasker (dispenser of information, learning facilitator, lesson manager and entertainer). As shown in the section dedicated to Edmodo, many of the exercises included in the course packet were adapted to the format afforded by the above-mentioned platform. However, despite the indisputable educational advantages offered by Edmodo, it is only a tool and it cannot replace the instructional network built up during a genuine face-to-face lesson through teacher-student interaction. The scaffolding process—during which “teachers explain tasks in small logical stages and then help the students until they can do the task by themselves” (Harmer, 2012, p. 280)—requires the strategic thinking and skilful guiding of a teacher. Thus, I came to the conclusion that not only did I, as a learning facilitator, have to provide information to students but also to organise it in such a way as to facilitate understanding and stimulate

learning. Furthermore, as I was aware that not all the students had the possibility to attend live Zoom meetings due to technical difficulties and they, therefore, relied mostly on asynchronous communication with me, I wanted to ensure that my materials were, apart from comprehensive and comprehensible, student-friendly in that they encouraged independent learning.

To achieve this, I had recourse to a combination of text (instructions, explanations, exercises and academic writing samples) and visual representations. In the production of informative texts, I aimed at obtaining the following: visibility, clarity (precisely identifying ideas/facts/concepts to convey, dividing processes into multiple steps, breaking up complex ideas/concepts into constituent parts and using simple comprehensible language to present them), specificity (utilising illustrative concrete examples and setting them in specific contexts) and coherence (presenting ideas/facts/data/concepts in a logical order and highlighting the relationship between steps or constituent parts).

In my teaching materials, apart from simple instructions describing tasks (e.g. “Listen to the recording twice and fill in the blanks”) and explanations (e.g. “Depending on the relationship we want to establish between ideas, sentences or paragraphs, we use different linking words. Some linkers allow us to connect similar ideas, while others help us to join opposing ideas”), I also included information on the objectives of the lesson (e.g. “acquainting students with expressing and supporting their opinions”) and on the aim of the exercise (e.g. “Getting familiar with the structure of an essay”). In addition to this, instead of simply collating exercises, I sometimes felt the need to guide students’ reasoning towards certain inferences (e.g. “A careful examination of the table in this exercise will reveal that the sentences **a-j** are the rephrased variants of the sentences heard in the previous listening comprehension exercise while the sentences **1-10** are the original sentences. By comparing each sentence **1-10** to its equivalent **a-j**, several rephrasing manners can be identified as shown below”). Finally, one particular type of text I integrated in my written teaching materials was my own voice in the form of humorous winks directed to my students (e.g. “The answer key can be found on the next page but solve the exercise on your own first. Peeping at the answer key before solving the exercise by yourselves is going to spoil all the fun”). Usually accompanied by smiling or winking emojis, such direct forms of addressing students were aimed at opening communication at a more personal level and at creating a sense of belonging. By this method, I approached the emotional rather than the intellectual side of students.

The text was supported and reinforced by visual representations. Tables, diagrams, pictures, animated effects for PowerPoint slides and emojis were used as means of maximising comprehension and facilitating learning. The visual aspect of the text (page layout, alignment, headings, line spacing,

font type and colour, underlining, highlighting and bold lettering) was also exploited. Furthermore, I used text manipulation in that the text itself was deconstructed (the text of an essay was disassembled into eleven fragments) and reconstructed (students had the task to collate the fragments in such a way that they obtain a coherent text).

I found tables useful visual organizers when writing materials for teaching grammar and academic writing. They proved useful for illustrating comparisons, for example between the verb form and the uses of Active Voice and Passive Voice. They were also suitable means of pointing out similarities and differences between for-and-against essays and opinion essays. Furthermore, tables were helpful in explaining the structure of an essay and that of its paragraphs. Instead of presenting essays as uninterrupted blocks of texts, I chose to break them down into separate paragraphs and to insert each one in a different cell of a table. Thus, I obtained a representation in which both the essay structure and the text itself were visible. This allowed students to easily understand which paragraphs belong to the main body of the essay and which function as introductions or conclusions. What is more, the table permitted a clear distinction between the paragraphs dedicated to arguments for and those presenting arguments against (for-and-against essay) or between the paragraphs supporting the writer's point of view and those exposing an opposing viewpoint (opinion essay). In addition, the tabular representation supported the understanding of the connectors and other means of signposting.

The following is an example of such a combination between text and visual representations. In this case I used a radial chart to introduce a lesson on modal verbs in a unit dedicated to gymnastic-related vocabulary. Instead of explaining at the beginning of the lesson the nature and use of modal verbs, I opted for a three-step inference scenario. Firstly, I showed students a radial cycle in which several meanings that modal verbs can add to full verbs were represented as various aspects of a gymnast's career. The following text was placed immediately after the diagram:

Gymnasts spend their careers training to improve their physical and mental abilities. They also do their best to keep a balance between certainty and possibility, permissions and obligations. What is more, they try as best they can to follow the advice they get, but also their hearts. Last but not least, they have to deal constantly with criticism.

This explanatory text was followed by a gap-fill exercise in which modal verbs (could have, should, must, should have, could, might, may, can, may not) were to be inserted. It was aimed at allowing students to connect meanings to modal verbs. The text of the exercise is reproduced below:



When gymnasts are successful, people talk about how high they 1 \_\_\_\_\_ jump. On the other hand, when they lose a competition, everybody is quick to tell them what they 2 \_\_\_\_\_ done in order to win. Their lives are regulated by a lot of rules and recommendations. First and foremost, the Code of Points stipulates what they 3 \_\_\_\_\_ or 4 \_\_\_\_\_ do during their routines. Then, they 5 \_\_\_\_\_ follow their coaches' instructions to the letter. Furthermore, physicians warn them about the injuries they 6 \_\_\_\_\_ incur if they overtrain or undertrain. Moreover, dieticians advise them on what and how much they 7 \_\_\_\_\_ eat before competitions. When they finally retire, they spend their time thinking about what they 8 \_\_\_\_\_ do when they were active and what they 9 \_\_\_\_\_ done differently.

The final step of the inference scenario was a table completion exercise. The table contained two columns of which the first contained meanings of modal verbs (ability, criticism, permission etc.) while the second one was left empty for the students to complete with the same words (modal verbs) they had used to fill in the gaps of the previous exercise. The purpose of this inferential sequence consisting of visuals and text was to facilitate the understanding of the specificity of the modal verbs and to reveal ways in which they can be used to communicate ideas and facts about gymnasts and gymnastics. This process was designed to flow naturally in the absence of a teacher's guidance. After solving the exercise the students were expected to establish associations as the following: present ability-"can jump", past ability-"could do", advice-"should eat", criticism-"should have done", permission-"may do" and interdiction-"may not do".

### Online assessment

The end of semester examination was organized as an English language proficiency test. Apart from measuring the students' ability to use English, it assessed elements of EAP as well as knowledge of sport-specific specialist terminology. The test was conceived as a digital portfolio comprising four sections, each dedicated to one of the four language skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing. Test structure and content were conceived in such a way as to be student-friendly and to uphold principles of academic integrity. In other words, the tasks were so designed as to foster student creativity, to stimulate learning even during assessment periods and to encourage use of content knowledge and specialist vocabulary in meaningful contexts. On the other hand, cheating was not tolerated. While students were allowed to use external sources to complete the tasks as long as they processed the information retrieved by means of paraphrasing and summarising, copying answers from any source was

forbidden and it led to the invalidation of the exam. Sharing answers with other students was equally interdicted and lead to invalidation. Furthermore, the amount of time allocated to each of the four sections was conceived as a means of motivating students to get involved wholeheartedly in the completion of tasks without overcrowding their academic schedule. Thus, the students were allowed 24 hours to complete the tasks dedicated to receptive skills (reading comprehension and listening comprehension) and 48 hours to conclude the tasks focused on productive skills (speaking and writing).

Reading comprehension and listening comprehension were tested by means of open-ended questions which involved retrieving items of specialist terminology, identifying main points, functions, opinions, advantages and disadvantages, paraphrasing, summarising and completing tables. Another aspect taken into account in the assessment was language accuracy (grammar correctness and spelling).

In the writing section, students wrote for-and-against or opinion essays on topics related to their specialism such as “Advantages and disadvantages of doing regular physical exercise”, “Do you think that professional sportsmen/sportswomen are paid too much? Explain.” and “Do you think that sometimes physical therapy is as efficient as surgery and less risky? Explain.” Students were encouraged to conduct research before starting to write the essays in order to be able to support their opinions or arguments with authentic facts. Points were allocated for the following: content knowledge, specialist vocabulary, structure, clarity of arguments and of topic sentences, supporting examples, explanations, reasons and language accuracy.

In the speaking section, students delivered three-minute video presentations on topics connected to their subject-matter field such as “Advantages and disadvantages of being a professional sportsperson”, “Do you think that sports are good recreational activities for children? State your opinion and support it by presenting reasons and examples” and “Should people have recourse to physical therapy only after injuries or, do you think that physical therapy can also play a role in the prevention of certain health problems? Explain.” The students were advised to carry out research and to base their presentations on real facts. This video presentation was to be recorded in an MP4 format. Furthermore, students were instructed to ensure that their face was visible throughout the presentation and that they looked at the camera constantly. Reading from notes was forbidden. Points were awarded for the following: content knowledge, specialist vocabulary, structure, clarity of topic sentences, supporting examples, explanations, reasons, language accuracy (grammar correctness and spelling), fluency and pronunciation.

The teachers in my department could choose between Edmodo and Google Drive as examination platforms. They both have advantages and disadvantages. Edmodo presents the advantage of being a multifunctional educational tool that enables file and task management. It allows examiners to create and to post tests as assignments and to control the time allotted for task completion by means of the “Lock after due date” function. This is a very important feature because it prevents students from both turning in assignments after due date and editing documents after submission. The possibility to create different grading periods for each student is also useful for managing tests divided into several sections administered at different dates. Another point in favour of using Edmodo as an examination platform is the possibility of storing exam papers in an organized manner. Despite all these advantages, some glitches that students pointed out during the semester determined me to look for an alternative. The major complaints were about the fact that quizzes suddenly froze but the timer did not stop, which prevented them from completing the task or retaking the quiz.

As I intended not to add any supplementary psychological discomfort to the already considerable stress induced by transferring from face-to-face lessons to online learning activities, I decided to reduce to a minimum the risk of running into technical problems for the duration of the examination period. Therefore, instead of opting for a “smart” (computer/software-controlled) platform as Edmodo, I chose to use a file storage and sharing service and to undertake the rest of the tasks pertaining to examination management myself. Google Drive offered me exactly what I needed, that is a virtual framework where I could make the test forms available for download and where the forms could be submitted after test completion.

There were several steps involved in building an examination platform on Google Drive. First all the students were asked to create Google Accounts using their real names. Lists of Gmail addresses were drawn and sent to the teacher. The next step was to create folders on Google Drive. I created 12 folders, one for each group I worked with. Then I shared these folders with the students. In turn, students created folders on their Google Drives and shared them with me. This method produced a two way connection between the teacher’s folder and the student’s folders. Once created, this framework enabled me to visualise clearly my own twelve folders as well as the students’ folders arranged in an alphabetical order. The “My drive” section of Google Drive displayed my own folders and the “Shared with me” section offered me access to all the students’ folders. In the students’ Google Drive, things looked the exact opposite. Their “My drive” contained the folder

created by themselves and their “Shared with me” comprised the teacher’s folder. To ensure that all the students would get access to the exam forms even if I should omit to share my folder with any of them (which would make it impossible for them to access the teacher’s folder in the “Shared with me” section), I introduced an element of redundancy in the system in that I provided students with a direct link to my folder. This worked well because the students who could not locate my folder on their Drive, could access the examination topics via the link provided.

However, for the system to work it was absolutely necessary that students share their folder with the teacher. Without this action, the teacher could not have access to their folder and, therefore, the papers could not be corrected. To avoid this, I spent a lot of time sharing my screen during Zoom meetings in order to allow students to check whether their folder was visible or not on my Google Drive. All these steps and requirements were clearly and systematically explained to students. I invested a great deal of effort and time in tutoring both synchronously and asynchronously. As mentioned above, I combined text with visual representations (process diagrams and screenshots) to show students how to create a folder on Google Drive and how to share it with me, how to download the examination forms into their computers and how to upload them to their own folder on Google Drive upon test completion. Furthermore, not only did I schedule supplementary office hours via Zoom, but I also used any opportunity and channel of communication (email, Facebook Messenger, Edmodo) to provide assistance to any student who needed help. Before and during the examination period I constantly checked the students’ files and uploads and I contacted those who had made mistakes in order to find a solution.

Unfortunately, notwithstanding all these precautions, there were students who failed their exam because of omitting to share their folder with the teacher. To prevent such unfortunate incidents from happening again, during the resit period I introduced a safety net in the examination procedure; all the students who intended to resit the English language examination had to write a request and to send it via email to the teacher who had to confirm having received the request and having access to the student’s folder on Google Drive. This supplementary measure reduced to zero the above-mentioned misfortunes. Other causes for exam failure included incomplete portfolios and fraud behaviour (editing one or several test sections after the due date). All in all, at the end of the resit period, 303 students had been able to attend the exam and to pass it.

## Conclusion

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that, faced with the necessity of moving a course online, I compensated for my inexperience in using online instructional tools by making the most of my pedagogical knowledge and skills acquired during the years spent in face-to-face classes. In designing teaching materials, writing informative texts or creating end of semester tests I used unsophisticated digital instruments to apply some principles that underpin my teaching: combining intentional with incidental learning and treating vocabulary acquisition, grammar instruction and academic writing as ways of boosting communication skills. What is more, to foster motivation I placed the learning process in meaningful contexts that mirror students' real-life preoccupations and needs. Finally, I did my best to reach the faces behind the interface, the people behind the machines by resorting to emotional intelligence. Weaving my own personality into the lessons and creating in the students a sense of belonging to a community and a feeling of being cared for, I tried to help the learners to cope with the challenges of online learning.

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# Curriculum Design in the Digital Age. A Framework for Developing Digital and Communication Competences in Undergraduate ESP Instruction

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**Abstract.** In today's digital era, digital competences and information literacy have become essential skills for acquiring strong communication competences during foreign language instruction. The prevalence of computer-mediated communication, especially in the online space, has led to radical changes in the way in which students read, interpret and produce content both inside and outside the classroom. Adapting the learning and teaching objectives to the changed realities of both oral and written communication is crucial to endowing students with the necessary skills to become confident and competent users of language in both their personal and professional lives. The proposed paper aims to discuss the challenges and affordances of developing a technology-enhanced foreign language curriculum to foster students' communication and digital competences in university-level specialised language instruction. After a brief literature overview, it presents a framework for designing a foreign-language teaching syllabus to help students become better communicators in a highly digitalised world. Underpinned by the social-constructivist approach to language teaching and promoting the use of task-, and project-based activities it presents an educational model designed to help students become better communicators in the digital age and discusses the challenges of aligning teaching goals, classroom activities and evaluation criteria to achieve the desired goals.

**Keywords:** *curriculum design, digital competence, communication competence, specialised language teaching, digital classroom.*

## Introduction

The widespread use of the internet and various types of digital media have fundamentally changed the way people read, interpret and share information (Prensky, 2001; 2006; Chapelle, 2005). In turn, the changed realities of communicating efficiently in a highly digitalised and globalised

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world have created new challenges and opportunities not only in people's everyday lives, but in the educational sphere, too. An increasing number of researchers (Prensky, 2006; Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Friesen & Scott, 2013; *among others*) suggest that traditional models of teaching are ill-equipped to respond efficiently to students' changing needs, and emphasise the importance of developing new teaching models that focus on giving students opportunities to engage in authentic knowledge creation, collaboration – often via digital tools and digital technology-, and promote both their linguistic and life skills (Karkoulia, 2016; Friesen & Scott, 2013). Adapting the teaching and learning objectives to the changed realities of oral and written communication, especially in the digital space, has thus become crucial to endowing students with the necessary skills to become confident and competent users of language.

In this context, the question is how we can design specialised foreign language courses in higher-education or university settings to help students become better communicators and equip them with the linguistic and life skills that will allow them to become successful in their future careers. A large number of studies on the subject (*see* Aesaert et al., 2013; Friesen & Scott, 2013; *among others*) discuss the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum, and indicate that newer models of teaching that require more complex cognitive operations and critical thinking are beneficial towards achieving these goals. In light of the above, the present paper aims to address the challenges and affordances of developing a foreign-language teaching curriculum in the digital age, and proposes a framework for integrating technology into the teaching and learning process, to foster students' communication and digital competences during university-level specialised language instruction.

After a brief literature and terminology overview, it presents and discusses a teaching model developed to help undergraduate students of Computer Science develop strong communication and digital competences during specialised foreign language instruction. Underpinned by the social-constructivist framework, and building on the principles of task-, and project-based teaching, it discusses the various aspects linked to the planning phase of (re)designing a curriculum in the digital age and discusses the practical challenges and opportunities that arise when implementing a similar model. While the proposal is still in its early phases of design and implementation, the model presented here will hopefully serve as inspiration for teachers wishing to implement a more technology-focused teaching model, and will become a valuable resource for those who are in the process of (re)designing specialised foreign language curricula in the digital age.

## Background and Literature Overview

The proliferation of the internet and the widespread use and integration of technology into all areas of life has radically altered the way people process and share information. As digital technologies have become an almost invisible, yet integral part of people's personal and professional lives (Chapelle, 2005), many of the basic conditions for teaching and learning have also fundamentally changed. Often labelled as 'Digital Natives' (Prensky, 2001; 2006), today's students grew up with digital technology and they learn and process information differently from students of the past. They process information faster, have better access to information and content, prefer visuals over text, and feel a lot more confident when they are in front of a computer (Karkoulia, 2016; Devkota, Giri & Bagale, 2017; Judson, 2010). As a result, the efficacy of traditional teaching models has often been questioned, with many arguing that traditional approaches to teaching can neither satisfy students' needs, nor can they help them develop the necessary skills that would allow them to overcome the challenges of living in an interconnected and highly digitalised world (Devkota, Giri & Bagale, 2017; Friesen & Scott, 2013).

In the course of the past two decades, a growing body of research has highlighted the need for a change in teaching practices, with many arguing that students today need a new set of skills to allow them to respond efficiently to the challenges of the modern information and knowledge society (Aesaert et al, 2013). Thus, current educational models emphasise the importance of integrating technology into the curricula, fostering students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, engaging students in teaching and learning activities that require more complex cognitive operations and focusing on developing key skills and competences that will help them be successful in their professional lives and allow them to better adapt to change. Achieving these goals, however, often calls for the development and implementation of newer educational models that "require different ways of designing learning experiences for students, as well as new approaches to teaching and assessment" (Friesen & Scott, 2013, p. 2), while at the same time requiring teachers, educational institutions and policy-makers to "rethink and transform previous educational traditions by means of technology" (Pettersson, 2018, p. 1008).

Central to this transformation have been the notions of *digital competence* and *digital literacy*, which are often considered vital for success, and recognised as forming an integral part of offering high-quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Aesaert et al., 2013). In the past decade, several attempts have been made at conceptualising the notions of *digital competence* and *digital literacy*, in spite of the fact that the use of the terms is far from being



unequivocal (Bawden, 2008; Ilomäki et al., 2016). As such, the term *digital competence* is often used interchangeably with *digital literacy*, the origins of the latter going as far back as Gilster (1997) according to whom *digital literacy* can be seen as another form of traditional literacies, and was defined as “the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers.” (p. 2) Gilster (1997), however, did not define a specific set of skills and competences that would fall under the general notion of *digital literacy*, leading to a long-standing debate over what it means to be digitally literate or digitally competent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While both digital literacy and digital competence refer to those key skills, knowledge and attitudes that are necessary for people to function efficiently in the digitalised world, more recent views in the literature argue that *digital competence* encompasses *digital literacy*, the former having a broader understanding and comprising a wider set of skills (Janssen et al., 2013; Pettersson, 2018). As a result, digital competence is often seen as a multidimensional essential skill (Aesaert et al., 2013), that goes well beyond the simple ability to use and navigate software. Thus, according to Ferrari (2012, p. 30), digital competence can be understood and defined as

the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities and strategies and awareness that is required when using ICT and digital media to perform tasks; solve problems; communicate; manage information; collaborate; create and share content; and build knowledge effectively, efficiently, appropriately, critically, creatively, autonomously, flexibly, ethically, reflectively for work, leisure, participation, learning and socialising. (Ferrari, 2012, p.30)

In the European context, digital competence has been recognised as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning in the 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, according to which key competences for lifelong learning refer to those skills “which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.” (Recommendation 2006/962/EC, p. 13). Aiming to support teachers, educational institutions and policy-makers by providing a ‘common language’ and define the key areas and sub-competences that fall under the general notion of *digital competence*, the European Commission has published the *Digital Framework of Reference for Citizens*, also known as DigComp, in 2013, with later amendments and changes made in 2016, now officially known as DigComp 2.0. Thus, according to the first edition of the DigComp Framework,

digital competence can be broadly defined as the critical, creative use of ICT to achieve goals related to work, employability, learning, leisure, inclusion and/or participation in society. Digital competence is a

transversal key competence, which as such, enables us to acquire other key competences (e.g. language, mathematics, learning to learn, cultural awareness). It is related to many of the 21st century skills which should be acquired by all citizens to ensure active participation in society and economy. (Ferrari, 2013, p. 2)

Focusing on delimiting the boundaries of digital competence and providing a tool for assessing and measuring digital competence, the DigComp 2.0. framework identifies and specifies five key areas and 21 competences that characterise digital competence, which are briefly summarised in Table 1. below:

**Table 1.** Conceptual Reference Model of 'digital competence', as defined in Dig Comp 2.0 (Vourikari et al., 2016, p. 8-9)

Competence Areas	Sub-Competences
<i>Information literacy</i>	To articulate information needs, to locate and retrieve digital data, information and content. To analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content. To organise, retrieve, store and process data, information and content in digital environments.
<i>Communication and Collaboration</i>	To interact, communicate, collaborate and share data, information technology and digital content according to behavioural norms, using appropriate digital tools, while being aware of the cultural and generational diversity in digital environments. To participate in society through the use of public and private digital services and seek opportunities for self-empowerment and participatory citizenship. To create and manage one's own digital identity and protect one's own reputation.
<i>Digital Content Creation</i>	To create and edit digital content in different formats. To improve and integrate new information and content into an existing body of knowledge, while understanding how copyright licenses work. To know how to give understandable instructions for a computer to solve a problem or perform a task.
<i>Safety</i>	To protect devices, personal data and digital content in digital environments. To know about safety and security measures and understand risks in digital environments. To be able to avoid health-risks and threats to physical and psychological well-being while using digital technologies.
<i>Problem Solving</i>	To identify problems when operating devices using digital environments and solve them. To assess needs and to identify, evaluate and select digital tools and technological responses to solve them. To use digital tools to create knowledge and innovate processes, and engage in individual or collaborative cognitive processing to solve problems in digital environments. To understand one's own digital competence and seek opportunities for self-development.

As seen from the table above, *digital competence* is a transversal key competence that comprises a wide variety of skills, knowledge and attitudes that cut across the boundaries of specific subjects or disciplines. As a result, several researchers (Markauskaite, 2007; Tondeur et al., 2007; Bucur & Popa, 2017; among others) have argued that acquiring strong digital competence is important across the curricula, and that

using digital skills is a natural part of learning both in and across subjects, and their use provides opportunities for acquiring and applying new learning strategies while at the same time requiring increased power of judgement. (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012, p. 12)

Given these perspectives, it is essential for all participants involved in the teaching and learning process to recognise that acquiring strong digital competences is crucial both inside and outside the classroom, and can be seen as a prerequisite for efficient communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, as Bucur & Popa (2017) argue, there is evidence that digital competences and communication competences in foreign languages “are highly connected and maximise each other accordingly.” (p. 258)

### **Curriculum Design in the Digital Age. A Proposal**

In light of the above, the purpose of the present paper has been to discuss the challenges, opportunities and affordances of designing a specialised foreign language curriculum to enhance students’ digital competence and communication skills. In line with the views expressed in the literature according to which helping students acquire strong digital competences should be a general aim across the curricula, and believing that digital competences are essential for one to develop strong linguistic skills, we have developed a new educational model to help foster these skills and competences in undergraduate specialised language instruction.

As such, in the remainder of the paper, we propose to discuss issues pertaining to developing a specialised foreign language curriculum for undergraduate students of Computer Science at Babeș-Bolyai University, enrolled in compulsory specialised English language instruction. Discussing the goals, objectives, course content, format and learning activities, as well as aspects pertaining to assessment, feedback and successful implementation of a technology-based curriculum, we aim to provide and describe an educational model or framework to serve as a useful resource for those wishing to implement a digital curriculum during foreign language instruction.

#### ***Background, motivation behind curriculum (re)design and new objectives***

As mentioned afore, in the present paper we wish to present and discuss the process of (re)designing a curriculum for second-year undergraduate students of Computer Science at Babeș-Bolyai University, enrolled in compulsory specialised English language courses spanning two academic semesters. Students attending this course tend to possess strong

English skills, pre-course assessment levels indicating that most students are situated in the B1/B2 and C1 range according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages scale. Nevertheless, previous years' experience has shown that at an individual level there is great variety regarding students' linguistic skills and competences, with many students complaining of lack of confidence when communicating ideas orally or in a written format publicly, and lack of necessary linguistic skills for professional purposes, including language required for conducting and participating in team meetings, communication via email, attending interviews, presenting and collaborating in team environments. Similarly, we observed a general lack of engagement and motivation on the part of students during traditional language instruction, and increased levels of engagement when using digital tools and technologies in the classroom. These problems and challenges, in turn, have highlighted an urgent need for redesigning the curriculum to align course content and materials to better suit students' needs and offer a level of flexibility with which students' individual needs and problems can be efficiently met.

In redesigning the foreign language curricula, we started from the premise that possessing strong digital competences and skills is a prerequisite to efficient teaching and learning, as well as the fact that in today's digital knowledge society, digital competences and foreign language competences are closely intertwined. Similarly, while one might argue that Computer Science students already possess strong ICT skills, including writing commands, operating on a computer and using technology to solve digital problems, in light of the literature overview above, we believe that digital competence goes way beyond the simple skills, knowledge and attitude required to use computers and software.

Given these considerations, when redesigning the foreign language curriculum, we had two main objectives in mind. On one hand, to improve students' communication skills in the foreign language, by motivating them to become active participants in the teaching and learning process, and giving them a chance to negotiate course content, and engaging them in teaching and learning activities that are closer to the real-life challenges they will face in their future careers. On the other hand, taking into consideration the fact that online and digital forms of communication have mostly replaced more traditional forms of communication, we wanted to create a curriculum to help students enhance their digital competences as well, especially in the areas of *digital literacy, communication and collaboration* and *digital content creation* (in line with DigComp 2.0 Framework discussed in Section 2 above). For this reason, we wanted to create a teaching and learning environment that gives students the freedom to select learning activities and contents according

to their needs and interest, and facilitates the collaboration between students and in the digital space.

To achieve these goals, we have opted for the predominant use of Google Sites and various Google Applications, as well as several free-to-use digital platforms and services, and decided to construct a curriculum around the use of these tools. The reasons why we have opted for using digital tools and online technologies as integral parts of the curricula are manifold. On the one hand, we believe that the use of digital tools and technologies is closer to students' real-life expectations and interests, thereby allowing us to create teaching and learning environments that closely mirror the real-life situations and challenges students will likely face. Moreover, digital technologies have been shown to have a transformative effect on the learning experience (Tanner, 2012), and have been shown to heighten student motivation, interest and engagement (Herteis & Simmons, 2010; Bucur & Popa, 2017). Moreover, we found that the use of digital technologies helps teachers create a flexible environment, that can be beneficial in promoting learner autonomy, and allows for an easier adaptation of the content, activities and assessments to better suit students' individual needs.

In choosing to develop a specialised language curriculum using online digital tools and technologies, we focussed on fostering students' digital competences, and helping them acquire the skills and competences needed to communicate efficiently in online environments. Following the definition of digital competence according to the European Unions' *Digital Competence Framework for Citizens* as well as Tudor's (2016) observations regarding the essential components of digital competence, we have set as key objectives of the course the acquisition of the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

1. **Knowledge:** to help students gain a deeper knowledge of the ways in which digital technologies and tools can be used to create digital content and communicate ideas clearly, efficiently and with ease. To know about various tools and technologies that can be used to create and share digital content and collaborate, and develop an understanding of how copyright licenses work. To understand and know of different forms of digital media, and be aware of their advantages, disadvantages and risks.
2. **Abilities:** to find, access, retrieve information from reliable sources from the internet and to evaluate content critically and reflectively. To use appropriate digital tools to construct new forms of digital media and content, taking into account the context and using appropriate specialised language and techniques to present, share, create and synthesise complex information. To collaborate appropriately and efficiently in online environments, using appropriate tools and language.

3. **Attitudes:** to develop a critical and reflective attitude towards digital content and information. To use information responsibly and with proper attribution. To be active in online communities and networks for professional purposes.

### ***Pedagogical Approach***

Given the objectives of the course above, and in line with current pedagogical models in foreign language instruction, the proposed curriculum design relies and builds on the principles of the social-constructivist framework for teaching and learning, as stated in Liddicoat and Scarino (2013). Seeing language learning as a social practice, the authors argue that students learn best when they have the ability to engage in collaborative tasks and activities, create knowledge collaboratively in teams and interact in complex social situations. Thus, according to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) there are five basic principles of efficient language learning: *active construction*, *making connections*, *social interaction*, *reflection* and *responsibility*. According to this view, it is important for learners to understand that social interaction stands at the base of efficient communication and language use, proposing that students should engage in collaborative meaning creation, reflecting on the connection between what is known and what is new information, as well as on their own learning process.

The principles of the social-constructivist pedagogy are central to the proposed curriculum design, as studies (Karkoulia, 2016; Anjewierden et al., 2011) have shown that participating in collaborative learning activities offers numerous advantages not only in the offline, but also in the online world. As such, allowing students to participate in group discussions and engaging them in collaborative learning tasks heightens their engagement and motivation towards language learning, and helps them develop their communicative competences as well as their problem-solving skills. Moreover, Reznitskaya et al. (2009) shows that collaboration and discussion allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject material and help students build a strong foundation for communicating their ideas orally.

Nevertheless, in order to ensure the efficacy of this teaching model, it is crucial for the teacher to conceive and create learning environments and activities that are authentic, and motivating enough for students to engage in collaborative meaning creation and realistic problem solving. Therefore, we have decided to incorporate task-, project- and inquiry-based activities into the curriculum, structuring learning units in such a way so as to allow for students to engage in collaborative activities to solve complex and authentic

tasks and work on mini-projects, while building on their existing knowledge and experiences and motivating them to engage in further research.

### ***Course description. Course content, activities and materials***

In redesigning the existing curriculum for Computer Science students, we started from the premise that in order to conceive and implement a successful model for enhancing students' digital competence, it is not enough to simply transplant traditional teaching models, approaches and activities into the digital space. As such, our goal was to create a flexible model that can easily be adapted to students' changing needs, and focuses on maximising the possibilities offered by digital technologies. Similarly, we wanted to create a teaching and learning environment that allows students to engage in both independent and collaborative learning activities, and supports both asynchronous and synchronous interactions to take place.

To support these goals, we have created a dedicated Google Site, using Google's free digital platform, called *LearnIT*, which can be considered the backbone of the project. Google Sites and the use of various Google Applications – including *Google Docs*, *Google Slides* and *Google Forms* – have been selected mainly due to the fact that they offer a safe and secure environment, which allows for the easy integration of interactive media created on other platforms, and offers an intuitive and easy-to-use user interface. Moreover, site administrators can easily add collaborators and editors to the website, and can limit what people can see, edit and modify across the platform.

The website *LearnIT* has a hierarchical structure, and has been designed in such a way so as to allow for both self-paced and student-led activities to be carried out. It has features that allow the creation of personal learning spaces, and pages dedicated to facilitate collaboration between students, using discussion boards, group communication and file sharing services through the use of various Google Applications. As such, the content on the website is organised into a few key sectors, as follows:

The home page gives students a quick overview of the specific sections of the site, presents the overall goals and objectives of the website, and offers an overview of the various sectors as well as a guideline for expected student behaviour and norms.

The largest, and most important section of the website is called *Course Content*, and contains the teaching and learning materials for both first and second semester activities. For each semester, a separate page has been created, which outlines the objectives, learning and teaching goals for each

semester, as well as an overview of the proposed topics and content, assessment criteria and a course calendar.

The course contains 14 units in total, covering subject-specific topics related to computer science and IT. Content for the website is selected from both offline and online sources, and is carefully curated and structured to support the specific objectives and goals of each unit. Topics and materials are selected in such a way so as to allow students to deepen their knowledge in topics related to *Informatics and Computer Science*, and promote the development of specific linguistic skills and competences, spanning all four areas of linguistic competence, including reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Each unit has a dedicated landing page on the main website *LearnIT* that introduces the topic of the unit, specifies related course objectives and goals and gives students an overview of the specific skills and competences targeted in each unit. At the same time, the overview page of each unit contains proposals and guidelines for task-, project- and inquiry-based activities related to the materials and the objectives of the unit. Each unit is subdivided into smaller learning segments that contain reading, listening, speaking and writing tasks and exercises and allow for scaffolding. Nevertheless, video-, and text-based activities are prevalently used in all units, and they are adapted to help foster students' listening and reading comprehension skills, while engaging students in activities that require critical thinking, reflection and evaluation of content and information and promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In order to help students learn the necessary vocabulary and grammatical skills to successfully perform tasks, and respond to projects efficiently, each unit also contains a vocabulary and grammar section, which contain activities aimed at helping students improve their linguistic skills especially in areas that are relevant and necessary to carry out the proposed projects and tasks.

Besides content pages, the website also features a sector called *Resources*, where students can find a few models for proposed projects, general guidelines on creating online content, copyright licenses and referencing, as well as a set of useful links pointing to other free service platforms where students can create content for their individual and group projects. Similarly, to help students reflect on their own learning and to promote peer review, a set of self-assessment criteria and peer-review criteria can also be found in this section of the website.

In order to facilitate communication and help create a sense of community for all the people using the website, two specific pages have been created. One of them is called *Creators*, where students are given an opportunity to create their individual student profiles, write a short bio and



add a link to their individual course portfolio. Similarly, under the *Creators* page students can create group profiles too, and present the group they are working with and including a short presentation of the members. Besides the *Creators Page*, another page has also been added to the website, called *Discussion Board*, which is dedicated to facilitating discussion and collaboration within and among different workgroups, students and teacher. To successfully implement this, a Google Group has been created and integrated into the page, that allows students to send emails to each other, open discussion topics on aspects related to course materials, assignments, etc. and reply to each other's' questions and feedback.

While the main website *LearnIT* is used to host course materials, course content and allow the teaching and learning activities to take place, students are engaged in a semester-long project, which can be further subdivided into task-, project-, and inquiry-based activities as outlined at the end of each unit of the course. As such, at the beginning of the semester students are tasked with conceiving of and planning a website to be used to publish content and information for computer science professionals and technology enthusiasts. In the course of the semester then, students are working collaboratively together to build their respective websites, and upload their mini-projects in response to the task-, project-, and inquiry-based activities outlined in each unit of the course. To present their findings and publish their projects, students are encouraged to use various digital formats – including written text in the form of articles or essays, videos, infographics –, to search and evaluate content outside of the content presented on the main site, to plan their projects, share tasks and collaborate with others inside and outside their group. At the end of each unit, students present their findings and projects with other groups, at the same time sharing and reflecting on their learning experience.

One of the main advantages of the proposed educational model is that it not only gives students flexibility in choosing tasks that are relevant and suitable to their own needs, but it also allows teachers to decide on the most appropriate way to cover course content. As such, the proposed model can be equally efficiently used in blended learning environments, as well as in the course of more traditional face-to-face interactions, depending on students' own needs and the teachers' teaching practices.

### ***Teacher and Student Roles***

The integration of digital tools and technologies in the proposed framework carries with it a fundamental change not only in terms of how the courses are to be delivered, but also in terms of the assumed teacher and

student roles. In contrast with traditional teaching models, students in the proposed model become active participants in the teaching and learning process, who must take responsibility for their own learning and knowledge creation. Through the use of Google Sites and by promoting collaborative teaching and learning activities in the curriculum, students are motivated to become autonomous learners, tasked with selecting, evaluating and deepening their knowledge, along a given dimension. By involving students in solving individual and collaborative learning tasks, and giving them a chance to negotiate course content, select materials and tasks of interest and use for them, and engaging them in activities that call for critical thinking, creative knowledge creation and peer review, students become active communicators and partners in the teaching and learning process.

Along with the changes in student roles, the proposed model also implies a fundamental change in the roles that must be assumed by the teacher. Thus, the teacher in this framework is no longer seen as the sole transmitter of knowledge and the only authoritative source of information, but acts rather as a coordinator, initiator, facilitator and guide, responsible for helping students find accurate content and information, guiding and evaluating students' progress and helping students find activities that suit their individual needs.

### ***Assessment and Feedback***

Given the objectives and the flexible nature of the course, and the fact that the proposed curriculum promotes creative knowledge creation, autonomous learning and reflection, assessment and feedback must be carefully adapted to suit the curriculum. Thus, according to (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice, 2019, p. 68) “when digital competences are included in the curriculum, teachers are expected to regularly assess students to measure their achievement in relation to the learning outcomes in the curricula.”

As a result, formative assessment must be provided throughout the course. To help students assess their progress and identify their needs and problems better, self-assessment forms and quizzes have been created that students can use individually to reflect on their learning and become aware of their needs and problems. Besides this, the teacher is tasked with evaluating and monitoring students' progress, providing feedback both during and after the completion of the student projects. Similarly, peer-review is encouraged, where students are tasked with giving each other feedback.

Summative assessment is planned to take place in two stages. Given the flexible nature of the proposed model and curriculum, we found it important to create flexible assessment criteria that allow students to work

flexibly and engage in activities of interest for them. As such, each task and mini-project proposed within units has been given a point value, on a scale of 5 to 20 – depending on the complexity of the project – and is assigned specific evaluation criteria that are used to assess the quality of the final product. Students can then choose tasks and projects to complete during the semester, and their work is assessed using the specific set of criteria. Points gathered during the semester are then converted into grades on a scale of 1-10 according to a previously established chart. At the end of the term, students who have gathered enough points by completing projects and tasks can opt-out of the exam, while those who did not or wish to receive a higher grade can take a written exam at the end of the term.

### **Barriers to teaching with technology**

Making technology integral to the teaching and learning practice is a complex task that requires careful planning and consideration of the various aspects that might limit the efficacy of a web-based teaching model. While web-based digital tools and technologies offer numerous advantages in foreign language instruction, such as heightening student engagement (Harteis & Simmons, 2010), improving academic performance (Tanner, 2012) and empowering students to become autonomous learners (Miller, 2009), there are certain barriers that must be overcome in order to ensure the successful implementation of a technology-based educational model.

In this sense, Ertmer (1999) described a model in which she categorised the barriers to successful technology integration into the curricula into two main types: first-, and second-order barriers. According to her, first-level barriers refer to the more palpable challenges of implementing a technology-enhanced digital curriculum, and include common problems such as the lack of proper equipment and infrastructure in schools and educational institutions, as well as the lack of time, training and support. She argues that these problems are the easiest to overcome, since they can be easily removed once money is provided. Second-order barriers, she argues, are harder to overcome, since barriers at this level “are rooted in teachers’ underlying beliefs about teacher-student roles, classroom practices, teaching methods, organisation and management styles and assessment” (McGarr, 2006, p. 1095).

Moreover, there seems to be consensus in the literature that teachers’ own digital competence, along with their beliefs regarding the use of digital technologies has the greatest impact on the successful implementation of technology-based curricula. As such, it has been noted (Hatlevik, 2016; From, 2017) that teachers’ “high levels of digital competence can contribute to a

more critical and frequent use of digital technologies” (Pettersson, 2018, p. 1013), and that teachers’ confidence in their own digital skills and their ability to respond efficiently to problems students might encounter during instruction is an important factor that influences students’ use of technology (Wastiau et al, 2017). Similarly, Scherer et al. (2015) and Cheung & Vogel (2013) have noted that the perceived usefulness regarding the use of various technologies seems to be a determinant factor for technology integration into the curriculum, and influences students’ attitudes towards technology. This is further supported by Karkoulia (2016, p. 52), according to whom “teachers’ negative attitude limits the potential of Web 2.0.”

These views point to the fact that in order to integrate technology into the curriculum it is not enough to ensure that both students and teachers have access to technology in the classroom and that overcoming these barriers requires a deeper transformation at all levels of education practice, starting with national policies, teacher training and continuous teacher development.

## **Conclusions and discussion**

The widespread use of the internet and the integration of technology into all aspects of people’s personal and professional life has created a complex school environment, and led to radical changes in the teaching and learning process. Responding to the challenges of the changed realities of teaching and learning efficiently in the modern digital society has “created considerable demands for schools with regard to developing strategies to support the digital competences needed for providing high-quality teaching and learning” (Pettersson, 2018, p. 1006).

In the course of the present study we aimed at addressing some of these challenges and discussing the practical and theoretical aspects of developing a flexible technology-enhanced foreign language teaching curriculum to allow teachers to respond better to students’ changing needs. Focusing on developing undergraduate students’ digital and communication competences during specialised-language instruction, we have presented a curriculum based on the use of various Google Applications and promoted a teaching practice that fosters collaborative language learning, engaging students in authentic meaning creation by taking part in task-, project-, and inquiry-based activities and giving them freedom to select and negotiate course content according to their needs.

While we are fully aware of the limitations of the present study, we hope that despite the rather theoretical nature of the paper, the proposed model will serve as inspiration and become a valuable resource for those wishing to transform their educational practice through the use of digital technologies.

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# Teaching English Remotely to Students in Journalism in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** After the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, many education institutions worldwide including those in Romania had to adapt overnight to totally new teaching circumstances. Given the novelty and suddenness of the situation, this was a difficult adaptation process for both teachers and students. The present paper presents some online tools that were used during the English courses taught to 1<sup>st</sup> year students in journalism at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași in the period March-May 2020 and a SWOT analysis of this new way of English distance learning for the students. Despite the remote character, we tried to develop all the English language skills of the course participants, from reading and writing to listening and speaking. Our aim is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of remote English teaching which we are very likely to come back to in the future. In this way, we can draw useful conclusions for any teacher who teaches under similar circumstances, and we can further improve this teaching experience.

**Keywords:** *online teaching tools, COVID-19 pandemic, SWOT analysis, teaching models, ESP.*

## Introduction

The education institutions worldwide have been seriously challenged this year after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Almost overnight many Romanian universities had to adapt to totally new teaching circumstances. Starting with the end of week 4 of the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, namely on 13 March 2020, face-to-face courses were suspended at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, and this meant that both teachers and students had to turn to online teaching and new learning circumstances as soon as possible.

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As far as the English courses taught to the 1<sup>st</sup> year journalism students are concerned (for more details about the content of the course, see Leon, 2019, p. 104-114), after four weeks of in-class teaching, at the very beginning of the pandemic, we kept in touch both synchronously and asynchronously. From the start, we preferred to use principles of the flipped learning model, which is

a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. (Flipped Learning Network, 2014)

The ‘flipped learning’ model is different from simply ‘flipping a class’ when students do different activities outside of class such as reading additional texts, watching additional videos, etc. The model involves four pillars known as flexible environment, learning culture, intentional content and professional educator (Flipped Learning Network, 2014).

Flexible environments identify the need for changing spaces in order to employ a range of learning modes; a shift in learning culture applies to the fact that the students themselves are actively and collaboratively involved in knowledge formation; intentional content refers to decisions being made on how, when and where to deal with content and materials; professional educators emphasise the importance of the skills needed to meet this increasingly demanding role. (Morgans, 2016, p. 22)

### The flipped learning

raises new challenges that are different from those of face-to-face teaching. The flipped learning model enhances the active and autonomous learning of students, changes the relationships between them and with the teacher, and encourages innovation within the learning process. [...] This model ensures that the student is satisfied with and finds the usefulness of the training received, attains better academic performance and fosters very positive attitudes among the students as a whole. (Romero-García et al., 2018, p. 109)

In our case, the students received in advance the theoretical resources in the format of PowerPoint presentations, short videos, funny pictures, etc. Moreover, we kept in touch with them on a messenger group created especially for this course, in order to discuss more difficult grammar issues, to answer the students’ questions, to ask them questions in our turn to check if they had read and understood the theoretical support, or to give them practical assignments to do on their own. Even if we did not have a course scheduled with them at that time, we answered the students’ questions whenever they had any. This implied either a group feedback or an individual feedback via e-mail or private messages.

## Teaching Activities and GDPR Rules

In the first part of online teaching which lasted for other four weeks we tried first and foremost to recreate the students' community online, and then to consolidate and develop especially the students' reading and writing in English. Online teaching is certainly different from face-to-face teaching, and in our opinion, students should feel comfortable in the new environment which invades their private space. Although apparently, the students' community is the same as in the traditional class, in fact the students' families sometimes become involuntarily part of the online courses, in the background, and the students may find themselves in embarrassing situations at home. Moreover, being aware of the current situation and taking into consideration the fact that some students had perhaps to take on new responsibilities at home or as volunteers in different organizations, we allowed the students who could not join the group synchronously to send assignments by email on the same day (however, there were only few such particular situations).

Starting with week 9 of the second semester, we continued to consolidate and develop the listening and speaking part as well by being in contact through synchronous platforms exclusively until the end of the semester. For instance, before the Easter holidays, we watched an online movie and then the students were asked to write a film review by following certain tips such as giving "a brief outline of the plot and characters without revealing everything", avoiding "using over-emphatic language", providing "a critical assessment of the successes/failings of the film, based on a specific example from the film", highlighting "features, when relevant, which make the film worth seeing" (Ceramella & Lee, 2015, p. 62). The ESP vocabulary lessons scheduled in the second semester for the 1<sup>st</sup> year students in journalism dealt with units on television and film, which happened to be extremely appropriate in the given period.

In general, we consider the opportunities for out-of-class activities and the contact with guest lecturers very important, and the English course participants take part in out-of-class team projects, which proved to enhance the students' motivation in the past. However, these activities were replaced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic although such projects had also been scheduled for the second semester. Thus, we replaced a semester project in which the students had been required to record videos and present tourist attractions in Iași with a current theme topic, namely a newspaper article on "Lessons from the Coronavirus Crisis".

Fortunately, the students could meet Professor Kristin Melum Eide from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim in February 2020, and then they had to write a magazine article as a follow-up to the delivered lecture and to the discussions.

An important aspect which had to be taken into consideration, was complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), since Romania is a country that implements GDPR. In *The Guidelines to ensure the privacy and data protection of the school community* provided by the International Baccalaureate Organization in March 2020, the following are mentioned with a view to online learning:

If a school is in a GDPR country and transmits or asks for personal data or information from anyone, including video and images, even temporarily, GDPR rules apply for transmission. [...] There are two major areas in online learning where privacy and data protection must be considered.

- Sharing personal data via the Internet
  - Images, videos, or student submissions are all considered “personal information” under GDPR rules. It is required for GDPR countries (and recommended for others) that any information created by students, or with them included, is anonymized, blurred out, or otherwise protected unless the guardians give formal permission in writing that the information can be used. If the student is considered a legal adult in their country of residence, they can give formal permission, but guardians should be informed. [...]
  - If the school uses social media as part of its contingency learning plan, the personal information of students, teachers, other staff or guardians should not be used or transmitted to third parties online.
  - If the school uses learning management or reporting systems, the provider must be able to prove their systems are GDPR-compliant or the school must prove that GDPR rules do not apply to any member of the school community.
- Video conferencing and recording
  - [...] Learners can also chat in groups regardless of age, though one-on-one conferencing with students is best for feedback on individually-assigned activities and general wellness.
  - As much as possible, video conferencing should be set up to eliminate backgrounds that provide information on learners’ personal lives and locations. A simple white or light-coloured background is best.
  - Personal names should be avoided in any chat invites or titles. For conferences, the student and guardian should be informed if the conference will be recorded. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2020, p. 8-9)

At the end of the teaching period a questionnaire was filled in by 35 students in journalism at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. The results have helped us to make a SWOT analysis of this new way of English distance learning for the students in the period March-May 2020. During the pandemic 40% of the students (14 respondents) had been in the countryside, while the other 60 % (21 respondents) had stayed in the town. However, only 5.7% (namely 2 students) answered that they had had more frequent problems

regarding a stable internet connection. That is 94.3% could most of the time join the online courses.

Regarding the teaching activities the students liked most, here is an overview of those most enjoyed by them (multiple answers were possible):

*Table 1. Online teaching activities in the period March-May 2020*

Activity	Percentage of students enjoying the activity	Number of respondents
Group work on the Zoom platform (in breakout rooms)	68.6	24
Watching a film online	68.6	24
Free discussions on the Zoom platform	57.1	20
Grammar exercises on the Kahoot! platform	48.6	17
Writing a newspaper article about "Lessons from the Coronavirus Crisis"	45.7	16
Writing a film review individually	42.9	15
Grammar exercises on the Zoom platform	31.4	11
Grammar exercises done individually on working sheets from the teacher and sent back by email after self-correction	31.4	11
Listening to audio files and answering questions afterwards	22.9	8
Online grammar exercises corrected with the help of the computer, on other learning applications ( <a href="https://learningapps.org/">https://learningapps.org/</a> , <a href="https://www.ego4u.com/en">https://www.ego4u.com/en</a> , <a href="https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/">https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/</a> )	8.6	3

As shown in the table above, the students mostly enjoyed the Zoom platform and especially working in groups created through the 'breakout rooms' feature available on the Zoom platform. They felt in a way that they could recreate the atmosphere from the on-site medium of instruction and enjoyed some good time together. Another platform which we used was Kahoot!, which allows the teacher to see which issues need closer attention and which students need further help. For the final evaluation we used the Exam.net platform with video surveillance on Zoom. The evaluation assignments on Exam.net are quite easy to access on the basis of an exam key, and the platform gives the teacher the possibility to see what the students write in real time. One may also upload audio files.

For getting started with online teaching we completed two webinars on how to teach online: "Online communication with students – what does learning from home look like?"<sup>2</sup> (March 24, 2020) and "Kahoot! in higher ed: Engage students through distance learning", with Alf Inge Wang<sup>3</sup> (April 8,

<sup>2</sup> The webinar „Comunicarea online cu elevii – cum arată învățarea de acasă?” was part of the series of webinars “Aspire Teachers 2020”, and the invited guest was the educational consultant Oana Moraru.

<sup>3</sup> Alf Inge Wang is Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and co-inventor of the popular game-based learning platform Kahoot!. Kahoot! was released in 2013 and is “used to review students’ knowledge, for formative assessment or as a break from traditional classroom activities. [...] Kahoot! can have a positive effect on learning performance, classroom

2020), and we also began a fruitful exchange of information with colleagues teaching foreign languages in Iași. At the same time, we tried to pay attention to the students' psychological side which we consider extremely important especially when there is no direct human interaction and when we undergo uncertain times. Moreover, we tried to bring everyday life topics into the online classes so as to show the students that what they study had a meaning in real life.

## SWOT Analysis

In the given questionnaire the 1<sup>st</sup> year students in journalism answered, among others, several questions referring to the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of attending the English course remotely in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Below there is a selection of the most eloquent answers:

## Strengths

*Table 2. Strengths of attending the English course remotely*

No.	Question	Answers
1.	What were the advantages of attending the English course in the time of the Corona pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We did not lose contact with the university, with the teacher and with the colleagues.</li> <li>• We did not lose our previous skills.</li> <li>• We continued to study grammar and new things related to our field (journalism).</li> <li>• We managed to do different activities that we would not have done under other circumstances (including playing certain games).</li> <li>• It was easier to attend the course (we could wake up 5 minutes before the English class started and still not be late for classes).</li> <li>• More students were present online than in the face-to-face courses.</li> <li>• It was more comfortable to be at home.</li> <li>• We managed to further deepen our knowledge of English: we improved our reading, writing, listening and especially our speaking skills in English.</li> <li>• We use written English quite often, but we do not get many chances to speak it as well outside the English course.</li> <li>• We kept up with the syllabus.</li> <li>• We revised the previous knowledge and this is an important part when studying a language.</li> <li>• The classes were even more interactive.</li> <li>• The jokes made in the English course brought a smile on our face.</li> </ul>

dynamics, students' and teachers' attitudes, and students' anxiety. However, there are also studies where Kahoot! has little or no effect. The main challenges mentioned by students include technical problems such as unreliable internet connections, hard to read questions and answers on a projected screen, not being able to change answer after submission, stressful time-pressure for giving answers, not enough time to answer, afraid of losing, and hard to catch up if an incorrect answer had been given." (Wang & Tahir, 2020, p. 1).

No.	Question	Answers
2.	Which platforms/applications did you like most during the English course attended in the time of the Coronavirus period? In the next column, they are ordered according to the students' preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Zoom was nice and efficient.</li> <li>•Kahoot!</li> <li>•Messenger: I loved the fact that our teacher used Messenger to talk to us, to send us materials and also to make us a bit happier with quotes, questions, videos and even memes.</li> <li>•Email used for grammar exercises done individually. We didn't use the Internet so much and it was good when it didn't work very well.</li> <li>•Microsoft Word for writing essays.</li> </ul>
3.	What skills did the course best improve in your case in the above-mentioned period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Working better independently while having to do the exercises on our own.</li> <li>•Patience with the technical challenges.</li> <li>•Paying more attention to the lesson.</li> <li>•Working in groups on Zoom.</li> <li>•Critical thinking.</li> <li>•Learning how to use certain platforms.</li> <li>•Communication skills.</li> <li>•Writing, reading, speaking, listening (depending on the case).</li> <li>•Grammar knowledge.</li> </ul>

## Weaknesses

*Table 3. Weaknesses of attending the English course remotely*

No.	Question	Answers
1.	What did you lack while attending the English course online?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Face-to-face interaction.</li> <li>•The atmosphere in the English class.</li> <li>•A better Internet connection.</li> <li>•Problems with the microphone.</li> <li>•Learning English in a real classroom.</li> <li>•My colleagues and my teacher.</li> <li>•Out-of-class team projects.</li> <li>•Freedom.</li> </ul>
2.	Which activities/platforms/applications did you like least during the English course in the time of the Coronavirus period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Zoom platform has security problems. A better one would be Discord, it is easy-to-use, more secure and funnier. 8x8 Video Meetings is similar but has a better sound than Zoom.</li> <li>•The Kahoot! exercises had a stressful effect because of the feeling of continuous competition. Kahoot! offers a ranking of the students and the percentage of correctly done exercises for each participant. The time was sometimes too short, and I didn't get to read the whole sentences.</li> </ul>
3.	What skills did the course least improve in your case in the above-mentioned period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•In general, it was a balance between all language skills, but since I am a shy person, I do not feel like talking even when my camera is off.</li> <li>•Maybe not all of us had the opportunity to speak as much.</li> <li>•I couldn't learn the grammar rules as well as I wished.</li> <li>•Working face-to-face.</li> <li>•The fact that we didn't have a project with our classmates where we could meet, not just online.</li> </ul>

## Opportunities

*Table 4. Opportunities of attending the English course remotely*

No.	Question	Answers
1.	What resources did you use to facilitate your success in the English course in the above-mentioned period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Internet.</li> <li>•A smartphone.</li> <li>•A desktop/laptop.</li> <li>•The theoretical support sent by the teacher.</li> <li>•The textbook.</li> <li>•Worksheets.</li> <li>•Online dictionaries.</li> <li>•Watching more movies and TV shows with no subtitles.</li> <li>•Grammar books.</li> <li>•Articles about writing film reviews from <i>Thought Catalog</i>.</li> <li>•Newspapers such as <i>New York Times</i>, <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>The Washington Post</i>, etc.</li> <li>•Books in English.</li> <li>•YouTube videos in English.</li> <li>•Phone applications.</li> </ul>
2.	In which way did the course help you to find further educational or employment opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•With this course I understood that nothing was impossible. When you want to do something, there are no obstacles. My right to education was not limited.</li> <li>•It made me think about working from home and that maybe in the future I could choose such a career. It was a good training for the future even if I don't see it clearly enough right now.</li> <li>•I could see if I had what was needed if another crisis period came again or if I found a job where I could work from home.</li> <li>•I learned that even if the world was on pause, that doesn't mean that our work should be on pause too. If we have a responsibility, it doesn't really matter what is going on around us, but what matters is what we do to change the well-known term of ignorance.</li> <li>•Using online platforms and applications.</li> <li>•Working from home.</li> <li>•The course developed my grammar and speaking abilities.</li> <li>•Better communicating with people when in a foreign country.</li> <li>•Adapting to new situations.</li> <li>•Still being connected and remembering English grammar.</li> <li>•Considering getting a job in a foreign media institution.</li> <li>•Adapting to a crisis situation.</li> <li>•Getting more knowledge about the film industry.</li> <li>•Staying focused.</li> </ul>

## Threats

*Table 5. Threats of attending the English course remotely*

No.	Question	Answers
1.	What was your greatest challenge from external factors in attending the English course during the Coronavirus pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The unstable Internet connection.</li> <li>•“Tech disabilities”.</li> <li>•The noise made by neighbors and their pets during the online classes.</li> <li>•Taking care of a family member.</li> <li>•Lack of electricity from time to time.</li> <li>•Having to share the device or the room with another family member.</li> <li>•Lack of concentration because of too much isolation and too much school homework.</li> <li>•Outdated or out-of-order devices, including lack of microphones and webcams.</li> <li>•Stress and a sense of panic.</li> <li>•Lack of time having to work and attend online classes at the same time.</li> <li>•Catching up with the lessons.</li> <li>•Lack of self-discipline.</li> </ul>
2.	What did you see as general or specific threats to completing the English course during the Coronavirus pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The unstable Internet connection.</li> <li>•Medical eye problems.</li> <li>•The temptations around me in the room.</li> <li>•The noise in the background.</li> </ul>

## Conclusions

The paper aims at presenting a practical approach to the online teaching period under the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes our own reflections and the students' feedback. Given their feedback and results at the assignments and at the final evaluation from the examination period, we would conclude that English online learning was generally successful for the 1<sup>st</sup> year students in journalism. Most participants enjoyed the online tools used, and actively took part in the courses. The number of students who attended the courses was higher than in the in-class activities. Some reasons may be the use of new platforms and applications which attracted them in addition to the necessity to stay at home and thus avoid other outdoor temptations. Although there are certain benefits of moving classes from the traditional frame to remote learning, there are definitely a lot of challenges, and it seems that human interaction and the face-to-face class atmosphere were mostly missed by students in this period.

By identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of remote English teaching which we are very likely to come back to, we can further improve this teaching experience in the future. Moreover, by using the flipped learning model during the online teaching period, we have noticed an increase in the students' motivation and cooperation. However, our opinion is that online education cannot on long term fully replace face-to-face teaching, but only



function as complementary support to the face-to-face teaching environment. In this case, we share the point of view of the Romanian Academy:

The Romanian Academy states that education is done in a social environment, through direct interaction between pupils, students, teachers, parents and any other persons and entities to be found in the context of social connection. The Romanian Academy notes the usefulness and efficiency of some teaching activities taking place in the virtual space, but appreciates that online education is a complementary form to direct education in the classroom. (Academia Română, 28 iulie 2020, p. 1)

We think that teachers as a community still need regular online meetings if this situation goes on (and it seems that combining face-to-face education with online activities will also continue in the academic year 2020-2021). The period of time using online teaching has still been very short, and the teachers need to build some online libraries where they can share learning materials for different subjects, such as an ESP library for humanities.

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# Blending Synchronous and Asynchronous Tools for Online Teaching and Assessment of English for Medical Purposes

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**Abstract.** As face-to-face courses in traditional classrooms have been replaced by online courses in virtual environments, teachers and students found themselves faced with the increasing challenges of adjusting to the digital media used for instruction and communication, as well as with the struggle to come to terms with their limitations. The new reality of online education has forced English for Specific Purposes teachers to identify the most effective pedagogical tools, while striving to accomplish course objectives, maintain student engagement levels and ensure valid assessment of their performance. The paper presents the experience of combining asynchronous learning activities integrated in a learning management system with synchronous learning via real-time virtual classroom applications in an attempt to meet course objectives and student expectations.

**Keywords:** *digital learning tools, synchronous online education, asynchronous online education, communication and collaboration platforms, virtual classroom, blended learning, transactional distance.*

## Introduction

Navigating the troubled waters of education during a pandemic has brought into focus a multitude of professional, ethical, social and psychological challenges that the main stakeholders – students, teachers and parents – had to face, along with the industry and communities. While schools and businesses entered lockdown and shelter-at-home measures came into force, education professionals struggled to mitigate the impact of the sudden transition to remote

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learning, make the best of the available resources or develop new ones, and provide effective learning opportunities to their students. All this was done while attempting to cope with the negative effects of high stress levels induced by various degrees of self-perceived unpreparedness, genuine difficulty to switch to teaching exclusively online, combined with little support from peers and school management. Frequently left to their own devices (pun intended), teachers were forced to learn about virtual learning, install and employ digital education and communication software, prepare suitable teaching and testing materials, conceal occasional feelings of inadequacy, and dedicate themselves to meeting the expectations of their students and institutions alike. To many of us, this was, simultaneously, a journey of professional development and self-discovery, allowing us to experiment, improvise, take the less travelled path, celebrate achievements and overcome inherent failures.

The challenges were more complex for those teachers whose subjects involve a significant amount of practical work that can hardly lend itself to remote learning contexts because the process itself requires the presence of students in a physical classroom. Among these subjects, Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) practical courses focus on the development of communication skills through a methodology based on an analysis of the target context, as well as realistic, authentic content, materials and tasks. As a dynamic pedagogical subdomain, the teaching and assessment of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) is an example of mostly productive tensions between the traditional mode of instruction and the requirements of the new reality we attempted to adjust to. In what follows, we aim to present our experience in the Department of Modern Languages at Iuliu Hațieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca, where face-to-face classes were suspended at the beginning of March 2020 and teachers and students were asked to switch to exclusively remote interactions via online applications.

Although our Medical English (ME) syllabus might be different from that of similar departments in the country, the ways in which we managed this sudden change, and later on, the transition to virtual teaching and student performance evaluation, could prove useful for other professionals in the new academic year, given that the pandemic situation will not presumably allow regular courses to resume in the immediate future. Our University announced “hybrid” education during the first semester, delivered both online and face-to-face, depending on the type of course. Understandably, as the whole context remains particularly fluid, university management decisions require regular updating, while educational planning and design leave room for the

unexpected and rely on the teachers' and students' ability to adapt, build upon past success stories and identify ways to move forward with more confidence and efficiency.

### **Synchronous vs. asynchronous online learning**

Our online education experience has combined certain contrasting learning models intended to compensate for the limitations of the new remote instruction context, meet the expectations of students and university management, as well as specific course objectives. Digital technology, virtual communication and social networking allow teachers and students to process course content, with or without real-time interaction.

Thus, asynchronous learning occurs when the two parties are engaged remotely in the assigned activities during their own time, while synchronous learning takes place in a shared environment through the use of applications that allow their presence in a virtual classroom. Both of these contrasting methods have advantages and disadvantages. For example, certain course materials or tasks may be more suited to one of two approaches, while a number of activities are difficult or impossible to monitor when using only one of them. However, they should not be perceived as mutually exclusive, as they can be used in combination, alternating learning opportunities in a blended approach, meant to compensate for the absence of a physical classroom. Table 1 presents a synthetic list of digital tools compiled by Mahoney and Hall (2020, p. 61).

In using either of the two models, the teacher strives to minimize the feeling of separation from the students and convert physical distance into a form of virtual proximity. Teachers and students are far from one another, but the distance between them is not solely a geographic one. We are talking about a pedagogical phenomenon, involving a construct labelled as "transactional distance" (Moore & Kearsley, 2011, p. 209), which is neither physical nor temporal, but fundamentally psychological. Therefore, what teachers should attempt is a reduction of this distance by designing activities that enhance *dialogue* through various forms of interaction between teachers and students, and *structure*, namely the provision of guidance and a sense of direction (Moore & Kearsley, 2011, pp. 210-211). By paying attention to the dynamics of these constructs and interacting with their students accordingly, the teacher may enhance their motivation for learning, or, at least mitigate the tendency of distance education to be perceived as gradually less and less enjoyable.

**Table 1.** *Digital tools: synchronous/asynchronous categorisation*  
(Mahoney, J., Hall, C.A., 2020, p. 61)

Technology Tool	Synchronous/ Asynchronous	Features/Benefits
Zoom	Synchronous Recording can be shared and sent for asynchronous learning later.	Peer breakout rooms Interactive whiteboard feature Screensharing Recording (to be shared later) Real time interactive Face-to-face discussions
Blackboard Collaborate	Both	Peer breakout rooms
GoToMeeting	Synchronous	Screensharing Real time interactive Face to face discussions Paid subscription
ScreenCastify	Both	Recording and playback tool Recording of lesson Playback of lesson
ScreenCastOmatic	Both	Recording and playback tool Recording of lesson Playback of lesson
Skype	Synchronous	Collaboration tool Communication
Interactive Whiteboards	Synchronous	Visual Graphic Video clips interactive
VoiceThread	Both	Communicate Collaborate via internet integrated into any LMS such as Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas
PowerPoint/ Prezi	Both	Presentation tools used in both environments.
Padlet	Both	Collaborative Mapping tool Digital media projects
Bubbl.us	Both	Free online mapping tool Collaborative Digital media projects
Khan Academy	Both	Video presentation learning tools Test prep
Flubaroo	Asynchronous	Formative assessment creations
Rubistar	Asynchronous	Rubric makers
Kahoot	Synchronous	Formative assessment
GoSoapBox	Synchronous	Formative assessment

## Managing the transition to e-learning

The decision to discontinue regular teaching activities occurred at the beginning of the second semester, after only two weeks of regular activity.

Initially, the suggested approach was a compromise between employing e-mail as a means of sending our students class materials such as PowerPoint presentations to replace course content normally delivered in class, and assigning them homework as a substitute for class activities. Based on informal feedback, it appears that students did not find e-mail particularly attractive, possibly owing to its linear, albeit bi-directional, interaction capabilities. In our case, during this initial period, a suitable alternative was Edmodo<sup>6</sup>, a learning, communication and collaboration platform which we have used with students for the last five years. Both the web-based platform and the mobile application have been useful in managing classes, sharing course materials and feedback, providing the rationale for various teaching and assessment activities, managing assignments, tests and examinations, ensuring fast and reliable communication, and sending out anonymous opinion polls and confidential student marks. It is worth mentioning that the platform also allows, and has been extensively used for, instant messaging and real-time comments. However, as a collaboration hub and content storing and sharing application, suitable for mostly asynchronous activities, Edmodo has proven its effectiveness as a temporary substitute for face-to-face course activities.

Very soon after regular courses had been suspended, the University purchased a subscription to Microsoft Teams<sup>7</sup> (MS Teams), an integrated platform which allows real-time interaction with large numbers of participants through video conferencing and offers rapid access to numerous third-party applications that facilitate content sharing and interactive task management. MS Teams was to be used by the teaching staff and our students to ensure the virtual, real-time delivery of courses and related activities. In terms of intensity and frequency of use, we were required to maintain the existing course timetable and “meet” our students in a virtual classroom. As a primarily synchronous online tool, MS Teams has been essential for teaching activities, and has been employed in various ways, from hosting online seminars to oral examinations.

Apart from these areas where the two applications have significantly minimized the negative impact of university closure on effective LSP teaching, learning and assessment, we have also identified several sub-areas of the EMP practical course that required a more dynamic and flexible manner of teaching, namely introducing, contextualizing and reinforcing retention of medical terminology. As a replacement for the more controlled classroom activities in which these aspects had been traditionally approached, we familiarized our students with Quizlet<sup>8</sup> and Quizizz<sup>9</sup>, two digital applications

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<sup>6</sup> <https://new.edmodo.com>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/education/products/teams>

<sup>8</sup> <https://quizlet.com>

<sup>9</sup> <https://quizizz.com>

that encourage individuals and teams to acquire and practise relevant vocabulary through synchronous and asynchronous language activities. They were generally met with enthusiasm and interest by the students, many of them expressing their preference for this format and hoping it will be part of the everyday classes beyond the stay-at-home period.

In what follows, we will briefly detail the most relevant instances in which the above-mentioned applications have been used during our remote EMP course.

### **Combining asynchronous and synchronous EMP activities online**

As each of our students had already created an Edmodo account long before the pandemic and used it during regular interaction with the teacher, switching to almost exclusive offline communication on course related topics was not particularly difficult. At this point, it is worth mentioning that students generally possess well-developed digital skills, rely extensively on their smartphones and laptops, and favour social networking as an almost natural way of staying in touch and updating their information and knowledge. They also welcome new challenges, despite the frequently overbearing anxiety caused by the disruption of routines, as well as by their perception of the various degrees of improvisation and unpreparedness characterising both their teachers' and their own attempts to adjust to the new reality.

Prior to the interruption of the in-person courses, students had already been provided access to an Edmodo folder with scanned copies of the core Medical English materials for the second semester. We started the new phase by setting the seminar dates and planning the time allotment for each of the syllabus topics, as well as the ways in which language skills development and assessment objectives were going to be accomplished. At the beginning of each regular academic year, students were routinely encouraged to bring to class and use their laptops, tablets or smartphones to work on the class material provided by the teacher in digital format, and access internet resources as required. This, together with the above-mentioned propensity for virtual interaction, proved to be an advantage, as many of them had already been accustomed to reading, annotating and writing texts directly on the screen. Therefore, when the face-to-face courses were suspended, most of the students were ready to adapt to the digital medium of instruction.

Prior to MS Teams being adopted for online course delivery, the core syllabus units were processed by students offline, during their own time, based on specific instructions given by the teacher. Uploaded material was accompanied by various tasks focussed on reading (skimming, scanning, comprehension) and terminology work, as well as listening and writing. To reinforce the language input, these activities were followed up by quizzes

created on Edmodo, assigned to classes and allocated a limited time and a deadline for completion. Some of the quizzes consisted of multiple-choice questions only (automatically scored by Edmodo), while others were a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions that had to be marked individually by the teacher. As all tasks and quizzes were announced as mandatory and monitored via the platform, they were also perceived by teachers and students as integral to the ongoing assessment process, their results being then considered for the final mark. Here is the original Edmodo message that the teacher posted at the beginning of the shelter-in-place period:

As announced, during this period you will be assigned materials to read (already stored in your Edmodo account folders) and exercises to do – mainly quizzes. Both studying the units and taking the assigned quizzes are mandatory activities, as part of the online learning process. Before starting the quizzes, please take the necessary time to study the language and content of the units/ materials they are based on (mentioned in the quiz title). Then take the quizzes (they have a comfortable time limit and deadline). Let me know if you need help and/or clarification. Please take care of yourself and stay connected with your teacher & our work via Edmodo.

In the context of uncertainty created by the public health crisis, it was both pedagogically important and ethically justified to inform students about the end-of-year examination requirements and the anticipated assessment methodology, in order to increase student participation in offline and online activities. Obviously, this outcome appears to rely on mainly extrinsic or instrumental motivation factors. However, informal feedback obtained from students showed that they were also intrinsically motivated to continue learning, despite the limitations of the teaching and evaluation methodology, so that they may not find themselves at a disadvantage when compared to those who benefitted from all the required face-to-face instruction throughout their university years.

We were constantly aware that students might feel, at times, overwhelmed by the amount of information to be processed and the course-related work to be done in all the courses and seminars a medical student is supposed to attend. Consequently, we occasionally posted interesting articles and fun material that we deemed appropriate at the moment (e.g. an article on the dangers of pseudoscience, including practical advice on how to distinguish between real and bogus science).

At the intersection between language skills development tasks and the occasional language-related relaxation opportunities via easy reading, there were mandatory assignments based on watching a film or a documentary. After watching the film or documentary, students were asked to work on the medical terminology and reflect on the medical issues embedded in the selected films. First-year medical students were assigned to watch *Fed Up*



(2014), a documentary on the health risks caused by sugar overconsumption. A worksheet was provided, as well as suggestions intended to guide their watching experience and help them focus on important aspects from the point of view of content and language, followed by questions that required them to watch the documentary in a focussed manner and subsequently express their own opinion on health-related issues presented in the documentary (with a possibility to discuss them during an online, synchronous, class). Second-year medical students were posted a similarly designed assignment based on watching the film *Wit* (2001). Both assignments were generally considered useful and enjoyable by the students, although some regarded the moving back and forth between the worksheet and the film rather unusual, as compared to their previous experience of leisurely watching films and listening to audio recordings.

In an attempt to diversify the format of asynchronous activities, we also designed other complex activities that required the activation and development of more than one language skill. Students were sent an audio recording of a doctor–patient dialogue, or a video presenting a medical procedure (e.g. lumbar puncture), asked to listen to the interaction or watch the video clip, make written notes while doing so, and then take an offline, timed quiz on language issues selected from the audio-video content. Overall, we believe that these asynchronous practical activities managed to ensure a sufficient level of student motivation and engagement and supported language acquisition, in line with the initial course objectives.

Following the transition from the physical classroom to remote learning, there was another important and challenging transition from the asynchronous activities described above to synchronous practical courses held on MS Teams. As mentioned before, what assisted a generally smooth integration of this complex application that very few of us had previously used was the students' ability to adopt social interaction and networking media in an almost natural way and normalise their use as an integral part of their academic life. After installing the application and learning about its capabilities through tutorials offered by the university IT department and individual mock practice, the next step was to create teams (channels) and establish first contact with our students at scheduled times. Supplementary course materials were uploaded and shared with the students, together with instructions on how to use them for the actual real-time seminars.

The seminars employed a blended, hybrid approach, combining teacher-controlled presentations of new material via PowerPoint, videos and relevant internet resources shared and viewed in real-time by students, with student-controlled activities that they were instructed to engage in, and then report back on their results. To exemplify, here is a message posted to first-year students in preparation for an online practical course:

Hi there! We'll have our synchronous class on 1 April (*No kidding!*), at 12:00 noon. The topics are "Taking a history", based on *Unit 47 – Taking a history 1* (Glendinning 2) and "Patient descriptions of pain", based on *Appendix IV – Symptoms and pain* (Glendinning 2). You'll also find some materials in the "Files" section here (most of them are already in your Edmodo folders). There will be teacher-controlled and self-directed tasks, plus live quizzes and streamed videos. Please don't forget about the language quiz that is due on 31 March at 11:00 pm (Title: Med Year 1 – Quiz 2 – Introduction to Medical Terminology). Take care!

The course structure was provided in advance and again at the beginning of the class. The topic was then processed in detail by screen-sharing PowerPoint slides and/or by visually annotating a PDF file in real time. In both cases, the document sharing was accompanied by the teacher's oral presentation of the topic, while students listened and were encouraged to ask questions or make comments. When appropriate, the teacher used supplementary resources by inserting relevant websites and videos where students could observe the specific language items (e.g. medical instruments and equipment) or professional situations (e.g. the medical interview) at work. Thus, the real-time interaction between teacher and students, as well as between students and class material, allowed the necessary contextualisation of linguistic and, implicitly, professional skills to assist with the reinforcement of language acquisitions.

Apart from the mostly silent time when they listened to the teacher's explanations, or completed the language tasks, the students' reading and, partially, writing skills were activated both while they processed the written material, and when asked to report back on their work. Through this rather traditional approach that mirrors, in a virtual environment, activities that are typical of a physical class, the objective was not only the acquisition of relevant terminology, but also the development of receptive and productive language skills. The teacher considered that it was worth maintaining a record of whose turn was to present their work or to express their opinion, so that all class participants contributed in a number of ways during the practical course.

As our EMP practical course is mandatory and students found it helpful and enjoyable – a perception expressed via impromptu ongoing feedback and end-of-course questionnaires on Microsoft Forms – student attendance was never an issue, although one cannot be always sure of each student's actual engagement level at any particular point in time. However, what surprised us from a pedagogical perspective was that every student, including those who appeared to have been less involved, completed all tasks in time and submitted their work directly into the chat area of MS Teams. The format ranged from smartphone, tablet or laptop screenshots, to annotated PDF, Word, Android or iPhone Notes files, and pictures of their traditional handwritten notes. Figure 1 shows three examples of the format in which our

students took notes and worked on the assigned class activities while participating in our live EMP practical courses.

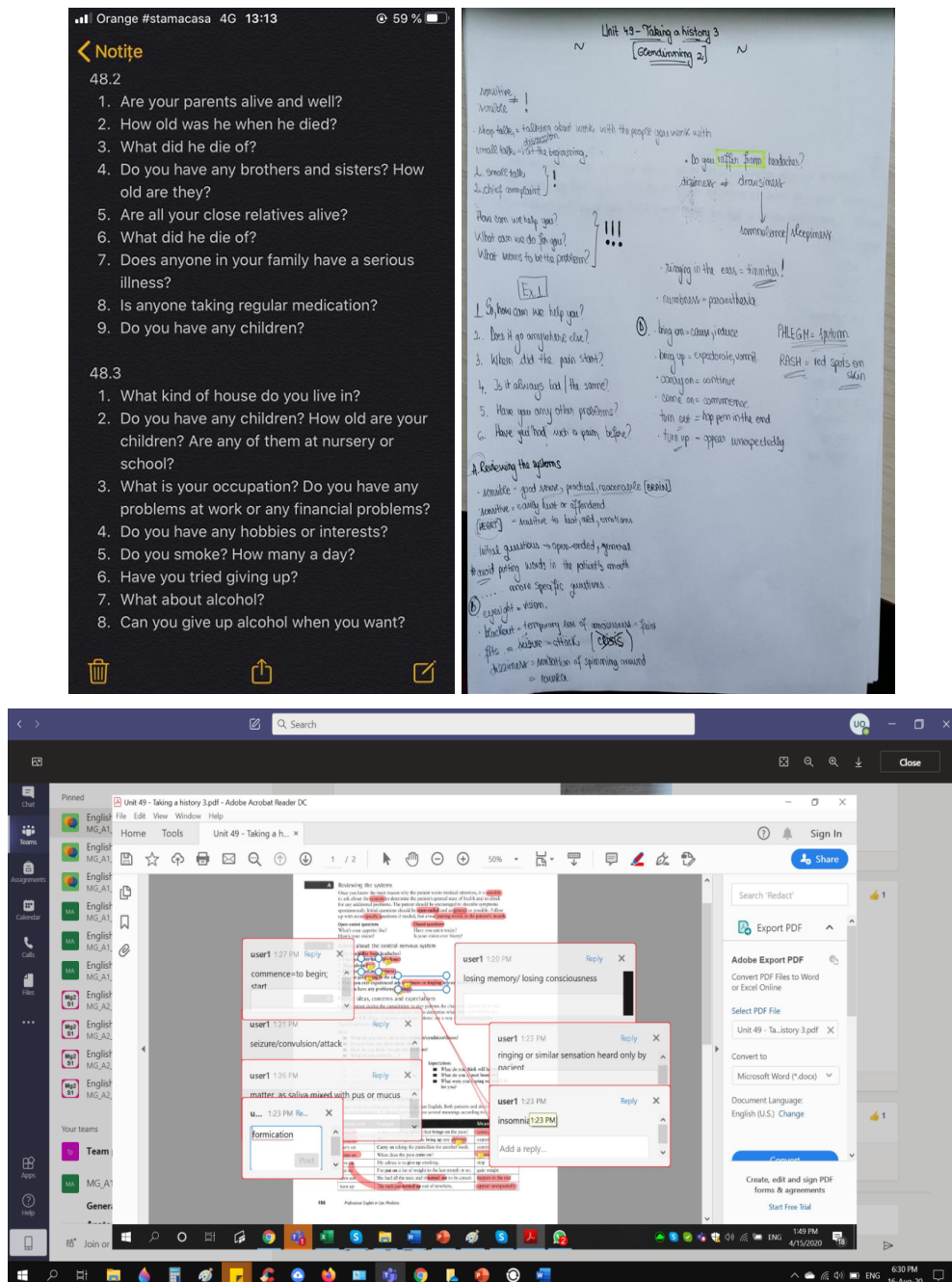


Fig. 1. Samples of student notes and class work submitted during synchronous online classes

At the end of the class, students were directed to a topic-related, achievement-oriented, live quiz designed by the teacher on Quizizz. For further practice, they also worked on more complex Quizlet “sets”, both synchronously and in their own time. Given the fact that each student had their own personal user profile, these activities were assigned in a targeted manner and could be easily monitored via the teacher application interface. Most task completion and quiz taking activities were followed by brief feedback provided by the teacher, and/or student questions on their performance. Some of the recurring questions were related to whether they were allowed to retake the quiz because of technical difficulties during the live session, and whether the quiz and assignments scores were going to be considered in calculating the final mark. The answer to both questions was positive, and students gradually familiarised themselves with these activities and soon started asking to be given new quizzes and continue using this format during upcoming face-to-face classes, whenever these will be resumed.

Another activity that second-year medical students were engaged in and appreciated as useful and enjoyable – and which started before the transition to online learning – was the presentation of a book on a medicine-related topic transfigured in a fictional manner or in an (auto-)biographical one. They were provided with a list of over seventy-five recommendations at the beginning of the academic year, started reading their selected book and scheduled their own presentation by filling in their details on a dedicated Google Docs form to which they had been given real-time editing access. A small number of students expressed a preference for a presentation on a medical topic, probably because of anticipated difficulty in finding hard or electronic copies of the books in time, or lack of sufficient time to finish reading longer volumes. At least three seminars in the first semester had been dedicated to developing our students’ presentation skills, so they were not complete novices in this important area of academic and professional development. However, what some of them lacked was sufficient practice in giving effective presentations. Many others acquired it during secondary school classes and/or student conferences. During the distance, mostly asynchronous, learning part of the course, they were offered the option to (a) pre-record their audio-video presentation by using PowerPoint or the web-based Apowersoft Free Online Screen Recorder<sup>10</sup> and submit it for the teacher’s consideration and assessment, or (b) to prepare a PowerPoint presentation and deliver it live during the virtual classes. Students were engaged in a demonstration of their productive English-speaking skills,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.apowersoft.com/free-online-screen-recorder>

initially by delivering their presentation, and then by interacting more freely during the follow-up Q & A session. Naturally, they received credit for their work.

As mentioned before, these blended synchronous and asynchronous online activities were designed in a manner that allowed teachers and students to seek and obtain instant or delayed feedback on their work and make the most of an imperfect educational context. Based on our fundamental belief that every teaching-learning activity should contain various evaluation moments, while every evaluative activity may be turned into a precious learning opportunity, we assured students that they will receive credit for all their previous work and active contribution. The University decided to restrict final examinations formats to their oral component, which was to be managed through MS Teams in a manner that suited the objectives of the course delivered during the semesters and the nature of the subject examined. In the case of clinical subjects, the selected type of examination was the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), while Medical English oral exams were designed as project work, resulting in a ten-minute oral presentation and subsequent discussion, according to a schedule agreed between teachers and students. First-year students had to prepare a presentation of a rare pathology or disease, while second-year students were required to apply the input received in class and present a patient's case selected from the book *100 Cases in Clinical Medicine* (Rees, Pattison & Kosky, 2013). This project approach involved individual reading, language work, selection of relevant data, and information transfer. Summarised versions of the presentations were sent to the teacher in advance and the oral presentation was delivered live, during each student's scheduled time slot. All students received guidelines and a template for their presentation summary well in advance. Assessment criteria had been shared with them during previous classes and included such areas as language accuracy, pronunciation, topic knowledge, organisation and eye contact. Feedback on student performance was provided after each presentation, although the score was temporarily expressed as a number of points out of a maximum of twenty, before it was converted into the numerical mark required by our university examination system.

### **The impact of using online applications in blended synchronous and asynchronous activities**

All the various activities presented above have been done with medical students between the ages of 19 and 21, who proved to be sufficiently adaptable to the new reality of learning from home, and had previously been familiarised with at least one of the web-based platforms we used (Edmodo).

As mentioned before, they generally appear to welcome the integration of technology into all aspects of their academic and social life. The design of online and offline activities also took into consideration the underlying principle of reducing the “transactional distance” (Moore & Kearsley, 2011) between participants in virtual education by providing, to the greatest possible extent, dialogue and structure, while attempting to maximise realistic learning outcomes. This concern for an enhanced *presence* during online classes, which are known to be able to create a feeling of isolation, was intended to increase the amount and intensity of online connections between teachers and their students, and frequently among students themselves, in order to improve course effectiveness and learning outcomes (Clark, Strudler & Grove, 2015, p. 62).

Another objective of the teachers’ efforts to design effective teaching methodologies during a less-than-ideal period and minimise the negative effects of the disruption on traditional education approaches was to assist students in their struggle to maintain a sufficient level of continuing engagement in the process to ensure the attainment of their most important personal and academic goals. Naturally, their long-term goal is to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in order to graduate from medical school and become confident and respected healthcare professionals. Research has shown that our actions and the goals they relate to are not equally important, their ranking determining how difficult or easy it is for us to disengage from them (Carver & Scheier, 2007, p. 536). Therefore, even though our students had to abandon certain important activities and engage in relatively novel ones, they have continued to focus on their long-term goals. To quote Carver and Scheier,

[...] it is possible to diminish the disruption that occurs at the higher level when giving up at a lower level, and thereby reduce the distress. This is because people often can satisfy the same higher order goal by engaging in diverse concrete activities. (Carver and Scheier, 2007, p. 536)

Teaching and learning online by combining synchronous and asynchronous formats and tools has also brought about a much needed diversification of instruction and communication, which we hope is apparent in the actual work presented above. Our students, previously encouraged to benefit from the “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) approach, have shown adaptability and enthusiasm when using their pre-existing digital skills as well as developing new ones in studying Medical English. The alternation of asynchronous and synchronous activities also contributed to the development of student autonomous learning and promoted self-directed work. Naturally, all these ensure better outcomes if teachers show understanding and flexibility

when students appear to be struggling with the shortcomings of distance instruction and the occasional technological breakdowns.

Just as importantly, by working remotely, every participant in the activities presented above contributed to the reduction of the amount of paper-based material used, and, although at home, connected online for long periods of time, they were involved in direct or indirect ways to reduce their carbon footprint. And that is no small achievement, especially when paired with the satisfaction, reflected in replies and comments in the end-of-year feedback questionnaires, to have managed to complete a year of study under difficult circumstances.

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# Converting Classroom to Online Teaching – Some Challenges and Tips

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**Abstract.** The present article sets out to sketch a brief overview of a few teaching tips in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) distance course during the period of Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The process of converting all your teaching materials, all of a sudden, into distance teaching materials may seem quite a challenge even to the most experienced ESP instructors. Since there are no world-pandemic-teaching-scenarios to come in handy when you are faced with such a calamity, the best way to go around the challenge seems to be experience itself. In the following, we discuss a few teaching techniques proposed by Penny Ur and try to determine if they have worked and how well they have managed to attain their objectives in a distance ESP course taught in times of a crisis.

**Keywords:** *ESP Distance Course Design, ESP teaching tips, online teaching, crisis teaching.*

## Introduction

The experience of Covid-19 has had a huge impact on all of us, teachers and students alike. From the sudden change in pace and methodology in teaching for teachers, to the large number of classes held online and the burden of efficiently re-organizing study schedule for students, we have all been forced to impose changes in our lives, whether we liked it or not. Once the teaching was moved into the virtual world, the greatest challenge that an ESP instructor had to face was that of re-calibrating all the teaching materials and scenarios from a face-to-face course format to the format of a distance course. Nevertheless, from our experience, the blended learning teaching technique in languages for specific purposes had helped language instructors a lot, especially in the sense that it had given them the opportunity to get familiar with, at least, a part of the online teaching and learning methodology before having to teach a distant course entirely. According to Bri Stauffer

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(2020) there are three major differences between online and distance learning: *Location*, *Interaction* and *Intention*. Most of the ESP courses are designed for a fixed location, that of a face-to-face class within a university building with the online learning process (eLearning) being supervised by the ESP instructor, who acts as a facilitator and a monitor of the class. On the other hand, in distance learning, students go through their digital classes at home and the teacher only checks in digitally. Since the location is different, the interaction will automatically change as well, thus producing a lack of the monitoring activity of the teacher, who might rely on digital forms of communication for the facilitator role (apps, video calls, discussion boards) but he/she will be limited in terms of monitoring strategies. Coskun (2016) considers that both these behavioural roles are very meaningful, as the facilitator increases the intervention of particular students and assigns responsibilities to students for their learning language tasks and the monitor supervises the learning process in order to make it successful, offering encouragement and total support at the same time. The third difference, intention, resides in the fact that online learning is just a part of a more complex network of in person teaching methods, whereas distant learning “is a method for delivering instruction solely online, not as a variation in your teaching style.” (Stauffer, 2020).

Teaching solely online actually implies re-calibrating all your teaching materials and scenarios for the required format: the distance learning format. (Rață, 2013) Redesigning is definitely a time-consuming activity, which may not even work properly if we take into consideration the focus of the ESP instructor to work threefold: on the ability to use special jargons, the ability to use general academic skills and the ability to communicate in other social settings (Gatehouse, 2001). Going further, the results of prior needs analysis in terms of target-situation, present situation, strategy analysis (what students prefer) and means analysis, may not be relevant anymore. Target-situation and present-situation results may slightly vary, but at the opposite end of the spectrum, strategy analysis and means analysis change completely and they definitely have to be re-assessed. Adjustment must be done to the syllabus itself, even if the content stays the same, the skills and methods would change, thus triggering a chain reaction in terms of teaching variation and techniques. Put simply, even if content, pedagogy and assessment shall be addressed similarly as in the case of a face-to-face course, the tricky part is that of planning the synchronous-asynchronous activities in such a way as to successfully attain the objectives of the course.

## **Challenges of adapting learning materials to online learning**

The work of changing your ESP textbook materials to distance materials presupposes that you are familiar with the differences and similarities of the two. Before starting the process of adapting, one must be aware of the fact that even though there would be online meetings with your students, (where the ESP instructor assesses the pace of the course and the on-going success and dynamism of it) most of the materials they get in a distance course are to be studied by themselves. In order to obtain a successful design of the new materials, the ESP instructor has to take into consideration a wide range of characteristics for the distance materials, which according to Rață (2013:191) should:

- (1) be organized and written for individual learners
- (2) address the learner directly (e.g., you can see that..., you – will note that..., etc.) if possible
- (3) be divided into study units representing a week's work or even less
- (4) be tightly structured with clear instructions and smooth transition from one to another
- (5) be designed to meet all the needs of the learner as much as possible
- (6) have a generous layout and a friendly interface
- (7) include a scaffolding guide on how to use the materials and how to organize your individual study
- (8) include a wide range of learning activities (activities, advance organizers, examples, feedback to activities, learning objectives, self-tests, study tips, summaries and lists of key points, tests of prior knowledge)
- (9) be designed to incorporate space for learners to write in during synchronous and asynchronous sessions

If from the methodological point of view the above-mentioned characteristics have to be taken into consideration, from the content-based approach in an ESP course, the principle of systematizing professional information should be addressed, in the sense that any ESP course:

must be designed in such a way as not to be just a collection of professionally oriented themes, materials, and activities for learning. It is supposed to be a more or less complete summary in English of the fundamental and systematized notions from the students' future profession/specialty embracing all the basic issues of future specialist's professional activities. (Tarnopolsky, 2012, p. 161)

The challenge arises from the difficult part of re-adapting the materials in such a way as to meet all the criteria of systematization. In our case, a course in English for Environmental Science would have the following phases of adaptation: a) redesigning the whole syllabus as a simplified course

of Environmental Science taught in English (Tarnopolsky, 2012); b) restructuring the materials for a distance course (addressing the learners directly, including scaffolding in terms of guiding explanations accompanying all the individual study work, creating summaries and lists of key points, allotting space within the materials for students to write in directly); c) rethinking the study units and correlating them to the pace of the online teaching (one weeks' work will now become more or less depending on the linguistic level of the group and so on).

The last challenge that must be overcome in a distance learning course is that of motivation. Students' lack of motivation due to prolonged stress, location (being home may not be the most comfortable environment for studying) and overloaded online schedules, have to be counter fought using connection and balance strategies (Rowe, 2005). Creating a positive learning environment is probably one of the most important elements that the ESP instructor has to deliver while teaching in times of a crisis. The following strategies described by Lee In-sook (2012: 18) may be of great use:

- (1) share a teacher biography with online learners to humanize the online learning environment;
- (2) remember the humanity of the online learner, and respond to the person, not just words on a screen;
- (3) provide an option for synchronous interaction with learners on a weekly basis if possible (face-to-face, phone, chat, computer conferencing);
- (4) provide individual comments on all assessments; not just a grade in an electronic grade book;
- (5) to model consistent, caring communication, provide a weekly update for all learners in an online class;
- (6) provide meaningful opportunities for learner-to-learner connections to reduce the sense of isolation experienced by some online learners.
- (7) address life/school balance issues as part of an overall program and/or course design;
- (8) be structured, but flexible, providing alternative activities or an opportunity to create an alternate schedule to meet learning objectives.
- (9) clearly communicate an expectation for when learners will receive feedback and honor it;
- (10) initiate contact with struggling or absent learners to find out more about their situation.

## Converting classroom to online teaching – towards a possible teaching scenario

In the following, we discuss a few teaching techniques proposed by Penny Ur (2016) and try to determine if they have worked and how well they have managed to attain their objectives in a distance ESP course taught in times of a pandemic crisis. The reason for choosing these specific teaching tips was based on the fact that they had already been tested in the face-to-face class registering great results. The online adaptations of the teaching tips are based on online class observations during a three months online course in English for Environmental Purposes for 1<sup>st</sup> year bachelor students and correlated to the results of the ongoing needs analysis. The rate of success of the techniques used were calculated analysing the correlation between the students' answers given in a final term feedback survey and the observations written by the instructor after each online class. The rationale of the study was to determine if, in such instances, as emergency remote teaching, an online ESP didactics could be developed and if such didactics could help in attaining the objectives of the course. The results of the study are summarized below:

*Table 1. Converting classroom materials to online teaching materials*

Face to Face Class Teaching Tip	Online class Adaptation	Estimated rate of success on behalf of the ESP instructor at the beginning of the class based on the needs analysis (strategy analysis component)	Rate of success (correlation between students' answers in survey and instructor's observations)	Observations
<i>"Write out your teaching plan"</i>	Brief notes on the digital activities and the order in which they need to be displayed	100%	95% of the students preferred not to have pauses in order not to lose their focus.	Due to technical errors, the teaching plan may be disrupted (loss of coherence without a teaching plan)
<i>"Always have a back-up in terms of teaching materials"</i>	Back up in terms of digital tools (e.g. different programmes performing the same function: Rewordify and Lingro as reading applications)	70%	80% of the students had problems with some of the applications due to soft issues and the back-up applications helped a lot	SS may find some applications more attractive than others
<i>"show your agenda to your students"</i>	An introduction of all the platforms that will be used during the class. The agenda can be sent as an email before the class so students can prepare their working platforms.	50%	100% requested a pre-plan of the class in terms of platforms	Most of the platforms require time to be opened so it is a good idea to be prepared in advance and be left open in different windows.

Face to Face Class Teaching Tip	Online class Adaptation	Estimated rate of success on behalf of the ESP instructor at the beginning of the class based on the needs analysis (strategy analysis component)	Rate of success (correlation between students' answers in survey and instructor's observations)	Observations
<i>"Teach the difficult stuff at the beginning of the course"</i>	Use the difficult digital tools at the beginning	65%	75% of the students preferred to work on productive skills first and receptive skills afterwards	Start by using Steller application for writing / productive skills first
<i>"Variation in activities"</i>	Online variation may become tiresome, so choose the digital applications according to the objectives of the class	80%	100 % of the students argue they would lose focus if there are too many digital applications and too much not relevant data	Less is more (not a cliché in online teaching)
<i>"End your class in a happy mood"</i>	Encouragement is essential in online teaching.	100%	82% of the students appreciated the pep-talk	Some students may encounter difficulties at the technical level.
<i>"Do not assign Homework at the end of the lesson"</i>	Assign Homework after each digital activity as reinforcement.	50%	75% of the students preferred to be given the homework during the class and not at the end	Homework will not seem a burden.
<i>"Define Homework by time not quantity"</i>	Do as much as you can using this application in 20 minutes at your own pace.	90%	87% of the students enjoyed doing the homework in terms of time and not quantity, especially B2 levels and above	Boosting creativity!
<i>"Elicit expectations or requests from the beginning of the class"</i>	What do you expect from this online course?	50%	75% of the students stated that acknowledging their expectations raised responsibility	Students need to know where they are and what to expect. Students need to be reassured that it is a linguistic course and not a technical one.
<i>"Share the objectives"</i>	Let me explain to you my linguistic objectives during this online course.	100%	100% of the students said they felt more comfortable knowing why they do a certain task	Students need to know why they are given a certain homework and how to handle it online.
<i>"Get periodic feedback"</i>	What has helped you learning in the online environment? What has not helped you? Is there anything you want to say to yourself?	70%	75% of the students said it was a good thing to be allowed to choose what was best for them	Focus on the learning process! Choose the digital applications that suit you and your learning style.
<i>"Involve all the students"</i>	We are all connected.	100%	100 % of the students agreed that being a team is the best way to overcome the crisis and that being involved helped them concentrate on studying	

Face to Face Class Teaching Tip	Online class Adaptation	Estimated rate of success on behalf of the ESP instructor at the beginning of the class based on the needs analysis (strategy analysis component)	Rate of success (correlation between students' answers in survey and instructor's observations)	Observations
<i>"Teacher talk"</i>	Manage proportions: teacher as the major source of language versus applications	50%	80% of the students chose the teacher as their favourite source of language	Students may prefer one or another, depending on the topic and structure (platforms, digital tools) of the class.
<i>"Group work vs pair work"</i>	Pair work works best in the online environment.	80%	92% of the students chose pair work as their first option in an online environment	It may be difficult to have more than two persons talking at the same time in the online environment.
<i>"Digital technology- use it because you need to not ought to"</i>	Use technology wisely. Know the identity of your students and their preferences.	50%	87% of the students preferred the use of technology	Flexibility.
<i>"Use the mother tongue if it helps"</i>	Always use the mother tongue if students need technical help and guidance.	100%	100% of the students chose the mother tongue in case of emergency	Avoid anxiety caused by the lack of ability in using technology.
<i>"Never say never"</i>	Students can show you a brand-new virtual world. Why not?	100%	93% of the students agreed that it is important for the ESP instructor to be open to the peculiarities of their specialisations	Be open and flexible. If it helps you teach them, let them teach you!

## Discussion

The first step towards online teaching seems to be the careful planning. The old rule "Write out your teaching plan" remains as effective as ever. In our study, the adaptation of the teaching plan was done in terms of brief notes on the list of digital activities proposed for each and every synchronous meeting. 95% of the students preferred not to have pauses in order not to lose focus. The teaching plan in the online environment assures coherence in case of technical errors or any other type of distraction. It is also advisable to have a backup plan for each and every digital tool used, two of three applications performing the same activity, Rewordify and Lingro for training the reading skill, for example. 80% of the students in our study encountered problems with some of the applications and in order not to

disrupt the flow and pace of the lesson/ meeting, giving students a second or third option, on the spot, helps a lot.

The study also revealed that 100% of the students requested a pre-plan of the synchronous meeting, so Ur's teaching tip "Show your agenda to your students" is of great value, as well. In the online environment, students have to prepare their platforms just like the instructor, so giving them time to get used to the platforms and have them prepared beforehand would improve focus during the lesson and ensure a relaxed atmosphere. Another important aspect that the study revealed is that 75% of the students stated that acknowledging their expectations raised responsibility and knowing all the time where their level was and what was expected from them helped them improve their learning style.

In terms of variation in activities in the online environment the results suggest that too many digital applications may be detrimental to the overall studying atmosphere of the synchronous meeting because it poses a risk in having too much irrelevant information. In this case, a very good correlation between the objectives of the unit/lesson/ meeting and the digital applications used is required. At the same time, teaching the most difficult items at the beginning of the synchronous meeting resides in choosing the most difficult digital activities and allotting them the first part of the online meeting. The notion of "difficult" in our study circumscribed the productive skills as reflected in the needs analysis results, students' profile depicting an inclination towards receptive skills and thus productive skills being labelled with different degrees of difficulty.

Homework in the online environment presents itself as an opportunity to consolidate the knowledge gained during the synchronous session or to be used as an introduction to the new content of the task-based language teaching synchronous session. Long (2014) provides a TBLT framework where through needs analysis the instructor detects the target tasks that cover students' linguistic necessities, those tasks being afterwards subdivided into task-types to develop pedagogic tasks. Homework can be considered to be such a subdivision and according to the results of our needs analysis it was projected to be defined by time not quantity. The results of the survey revealed that 87% of the students enjoyed doing their homework in terms of time and not quantity. The instructor observations registered an increase in creativity for B2 and above and a boost in learning engagement for students with a lower linguistic level.

## Conclusion

The challenge of online teaching may be greater than one may have anticipated, especially if we take into consideration the sudden on-going change, we were all forced to face. The first semester of the academic year 2019-2020 started in a face-to-face format and all syllabi were designed for such an academic structure. Blended learning could have been of use in the cases where the ESP instructors chose to implement them in their syllabi, but even so, most of the materials had to be re-adapted for distance learning courses.

The present study offers a possible teaching scenario for the online environment which can be adapted to any ESP specialisation. The significance of the present research resides in the fact that it adapts the teaching scenario to the tremendous teaching times of nowadays. Nevertheless, further research should be developed in terms of teaching techniques in the online environment for a better quality of the teaching act in the ESP and not only.

The teaching techniques chosen to be used during a three months distance course in English for Environmental Purposes managed to attain their goals but only after a careful re-adaptation for an online teaching format. Constant feedback and careful observation were the two essential elements that assured success in such a stressful period of teaching.

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# Assessment of ESP Language Acquisition through the Lens Of Gamification

IOANA MUDURE-IACOB<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Digital gamification represents a versatile tool in supporting the complex act of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and stands as a pragmatic instrument in learners' endeavour to match the theoretical and educational practice. The adaptability of gamification to suit the needs of digital native learners is an undeniable feature of the online array of frameworks destined to encourage learning while, at the same time, it provides genuine practice contexts. Along with its core functionality in boosting motivation among students who learn ESP, gamification also pertains to giving educators more freedom in designing and customizing learning outcomes, as well as assessing language progress through a relaxed mechanism of evaluation. By enabling learning within contexts that are customized according to students' particular needs and interests in language learning, gamification also allows learners to track down their individual progress and receive/provide valuable feedback. Assessment in the filter of gamification becomes, therefore, a resourceful mechanism that triggers learners to naturally follow and solve complex instructions, to put their acquired skills to test and to interact with other students in order to complete the virtual game tasks. With learning platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizlet or Quizizz, the act of game-based evaluation shifts to a challenging and complex environment meant to motivate learners in pursuing self-actualization.

**Keywords:** *assessment, gamification, feedback, gamified quizzes, self-learning.*

## Introduction

Digitalization of learning and the use of a complex virtual classroom as the new mainstream teaching mechanism have been chosen as leading instruments in the recent teaching and learning styles. Paired with a learning population named “digital native” and the necessity to answer its particular needs and wants, the process of teaching ESP courses has become an integrated tool in the holistic communication know-how.

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Having crossed the bridge of adapting teaching content and methods to develop digitally literate learners towards an ongoing phenomenon of dealing with students who are digital natives, there are various conundrums that grasp the depth of this issue. One relevant question that occurs is how can teachers embed students' readiness to explore the digital world freely in the virtual classroom, pairing their proneness to roam digitally with a practical acquisition of language and communication skills? Moreover, with the classroom functionality under scrutiny and the students' "digital vernacular expertise" (Thorne, Reinhardt, 2008, p. 559), to what extent can students be engaged as active content creators to online classes and how can instructors let them gamify testing? Likewise, having embedded gamified assessment procedures into the overall evaluation process, what functionalities and threats may occur, and how can such assessment methods be applied so as to motivate and engage learners on the way? The current paper will handle potential answers to the above questions, indicating a line of direction for the benefits and risks of including gamification into assessment procedures as a long-term procedure.

### **Why Gamify Testing? Implications of Integrating Gamification into ESP Assessment**

Embedding digital tools and using blended learning as an approach to building skills is already considered common practice when teaching ESP. Nonetheless, the use of tech-platform formative and summative assessment in classroom is less common and it may well be considered a feature of the trend of merging online learning into daily practices. With the reconceptualisation of non-traditional spaces for learning and the recent shift towards the exclusively online educational process, a major issue under scrutiny regarded the reliability of assessment, respectively the way in which assessment may be paired with gamified activities so as to provide motivation and constant feedback for learners, as well as to render a genuine mirroring of learners' progress.

In determining the features of evaluation, it is essential to stem from the definition of *assessment* as those "activities undertaken by teachers – and by their students in assessing themselves – that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such form of assessment becomes *formative assessment* when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs" (Black, Wiliam, 1998, p.140). Formative assessment, as an embedded and ongoing tool used throughout the teaching process, triggers multiple benefits both for learners, who are motivated, and given prompt and customised feedback, and for teachers, who can sketch an accurate image of the students' progress track. Moreover, "a formative assessment is a tool that

teachers use to measure student grasp of specific topics and skills they are teaching. It's a 'midstream' tool to identify specific student misconceptions and mistakes while the material is being taught" (Kahl, 2005, p.11).

Being remedial and motivational, as well as informal and learner-friendly, formative assessment may well be used as a proactive instrument that replaces the proctored-testing structure of evaluation with a personalised mechanism of tracking learners' achievement. Not only does it provide an outlook into the future steps to be taken in adjusting content and speed of teaching processes, but it allows for learners to take over the authority role and gain increased responsibility. This may be put into practice through peer and self-assessment schemes, which enable a more objective perspective, together with an expansion of taught skills into critical thinking or debate-based evaluation. "An assessment functions formatively to the extent that evidence about student achievement elicited by the assessment is interpreted and used to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better or better founded, than the decisions that would have been taken in the absence of that evidence" (Black, Wiliam, 2009, p. 4).

Considering the learner-friendly feature of formative assessment and its function as assessment *for* learning, rather than *of* learning, paired with the digital framework in which learning takes place, a valuable strategy to keep learners engaged while also evaluating their progress is gamification. Koivisto, Hamari and Sarsa define gamification as "designing information systems to afford similar experiences and motivations as games go, and consequently attempting to affect user behaviour" (Koivisto et al., 2014, p. 3030). In joining gamification and formative assessment as structural models of making language teaching more practical, learners are thus guided through the practice of language skills by being exposed to game-based experiences.

Moreover, with gamification as a vehicle for formative assessment, there is an undeniable advantage regarding the *outcome of evaluation*. If in traditional and on-site formative assessment progress of ESP acquisition is reflected in the capacity to properly use grammar structures and specific terminology in conversations and role-played practice situations, the needs of digital natives change significantly. Namely, such learners will tend to escape such tedious routine practice sequences and call for a need to prove their *networking capacity* in the chosen field of study.

Gamification has been adopted to support learning in a variety of contexts and subject areas and to address related attitudes, activities and behaviours, such as participatory approaches, collaboration, self-guided study, completion of assignments, making assessments easier and more effective, integration of exploratory approaches to learning and strengthening student creativity and retention. (Caponetto et al., 2014, p. 56)

The current shift from traditional teaching and learning to online education had a powerful impact on all aspects of organizing and delivering content, while in the particular case of teaching ESP, it meant redesigning distribution of skill practice throughout new frameworks of time. What initially started as emergency remote learning and teaching became common practice and the implications for the future are quite challenging. The multiple transitions that have recently marked the process of teaching—from paper and pencil to digital, from fixed space to remote learning, from fixed time to on-demand teaching or from human-based to tech-based inevitable paved the way for educators asking themselves: “where are we going ?” and “how do we get there ?”.

If, along the way, teachers managed to provide proper digital learning contexts and adapt the practice of language skills altogether in online sessions based on gamification, role-playing and integrative platforms, new concerns occurred regarding assessment. The current process of teaching and learning languages is oriented towards building ecosystems that integrate learning and assessment to a nearly balanced representation. Learning is becoming mobile and paperless, as well as adaptive and automated, which means that teachers need to take over the responsibility of customizing the tech dimension in order to facilitate accurate educational access. Moreover, the shift has also led to teaching not just English (as foreign language/for specific purposes), but also bearing in mind that any form of ESP assessment must refer to other integrated and soft skills.

Gamified assessment, in this respect, may be a valid instrument of creating suitable learning contexts in the ESP digital class, by engaging both teachers and students and by making formative assessment a fun and relaxed routine activity. We refer to Gamified Assessment or “Gamification in the context of assessment – as the process of applying game-based elements to assessment processes, in a deliberate attempt to either make them more appealing, enjoyable, engaging or less onerous to candidates” (Guy, 2019, p. 4). The applicability of gamification in the field of assessment seems more accurate in the formative branch rather than the summative one, as it validates the core functions of evaluation, that of “diagnosis, control and classification, while simultaneously satisfying the need for effective use of feedback, so that students have a clear understanding of the learning goals or objectives” (Menedez, Bortolli, 2016, p. 566). Nonetheless, there are particular needs to be complied with in order to find the balance and not fall prey to using gamification as a mere entertainment feature of learning, which stands as a major challenge of digital teaching.

The necessity to change and adjust formative assessment in the framework of digital teaching is not solely based on the recent pandemics-generated transition from traditional to tech-based education. Recent critiques

of policy and practice in language testing have indicated that there are significant drawbacks to traditional formative assessment. Amos Paran mentions particular issues related to “psychometrics, achievement of standardisation, alignment and conformity, which leads to the narrowing of assessment and it circumscribes the content that is taught in the language classroom, as testing mostly verifies language” (Paran, 2010, p.10). In addition, the digital framework sometimes assigns an asynchronous nature of interactivity among learners, which deprives formative assessment of its benefits such as shared responsibility and peer-review. In this sense, there is a stringent need to foster engagement that is meaningful and resourceful, as well as facilitate learning while motivating learners.

To satisfy these needs and correct the drawbacks above-mentioned, gamified assessment combines two elements of support: learners benefit from substantial, regular and meaningful feedback and motivators (through reward system of badges, points or other virtual benefits) and teachers gain accurate understanding of learners’ progress and thus manage to better orchestrate the teaching process. Feedback, on the one hand, functions as essential unit of measuring evaluation, but in the case of digital natives, it must be more prompt and customized. The array of evaluation tools and progress measurements that gamified sequences of educational apps provide sparkle motivation both on the intrinsic and extrinsic level, thus creating motivation boosters along the learning path.

When people are intrinsically motivated they tend to take an activity for their own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feeling of accomplishments it evokes. On the other hand when people become extrinsically motivated is to obtain some reward or avoid punishment. [...] Gamification combines these two types of motivation. In addition the game elements will adjust greatly for the L2 learner. For example, by using extrinsic rewards like levels, points, and badges to improve engagement while intrinsically motivating towards the achievement, mastery, autonomy, and sense of belonging” (Figuerola, 2015, p.48).

The issue that must be taken into account, nonetheless, is how educators should design the amount of practice and content of their ESP lectures in such a way as to strike a balance between the theoretical and in-class practice and the virtually unlimited assessment options provided by gamified activities. As tempting as it might be to allocate a majority of the content to gamification, due to management and prompt assessment reasons, mainly, as well as to increased participation of learners, doing so could function in the detriment of the learner. Particularly, through excessive use of gamified apps and platforms in order to increase one’s language skills, learners will simply mimic the game-playing behaviour rather than actually

fulfil the aimed objective of gaining knowledge. For this reason, educators could integrate gamification gradually, initially as optional extension activities, meant to support and put to test the in-class taught skills and later on as more complex role-playing scenarios, where incentive schemes – badges, leaderboards or XPs – could validate one's status in the language acquisition trajectory.

Furthermore, when integrating gamification in assessment sequences there are specific requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to make learning and teaching productive. The specificity of ESP teaching, in this sense, will resort to using educational apps as tools of gamified assessment in order to allow evaluation of each language skill that students aim to develop in their studies.

Primarily, *usability and interaction issues* represent an important section of the debate revolving around gamified assessment. One main objective of teaching ESP is to facilitate learners' access to practice their skills and engage in conversational or production patterns that are specific to their field of study, which might not be perceived as natural as the on-site teaching context. One extremely relevant aspect to be mentioned at this point refers to using *tutorials as familiarization techniques* that teachers must design for learners. Not being able to prove mastery of a specific tested skill (be that speaking, listening or reading, writing) because of one's incapacity to use a specific application or tech platform that embeds language evaluation sequences can be extremely frustrating and discouraging, lessening the motivation benefit for further similar activities. Nevertheless, with the teacher's role as director and coordinator, a customized tutorial showing registering and use of app features will provide encouraging background for students to play the gamified quizzes.

Another important element to be taken into account when choosing a suitable app to test learners' progress is related to the *type and amount of feedback* provided within gamified quizzes. The various quiz-based platforms available for language assessment – Kahoot!, Quizlet, Quizizz, Socrative, TedEd videos, generally have a complex system of providing feedback to students/players, by replacing point/grade-based traditional test results with badges and leaderboards. This renders positive attitudes towards participation and engagement in the assigned assessment sequences, while also providing instant mirroring of the student's punctual achievement.

However, such feedback may also trigger some less desired outcomes, such as demotivating students who fail to reach their aimed progress-line to pursue language learning through such gamified apps. Likewise, appreciation of students' achievement through gamified quizzes in the form of points, gold

medals or badges might be insufficient for adult learners and undergraduates and more suitable for young learners or students with increased competitive spirit.

Rewards should be left at the classroom door, as a well-designed game only deploys certain mechanics to support an intrinsically rewarding experience. If the experience is removed but the mechanics kept, the user's psychology changes so that, in essence, it uses mechanics to drive mechanical behaviours with little or no gain for the educational process. Nevertheless, motivators like points, badges, and leaderboards are not effective for students who aren't naturally competitive, and if these elements will have a central role, the students will finally lose their interest. (Furdu et al., 2017, p. 58)

On the other hand, from the teacher's standpoint, the issue of amount and type of feedback appears to be an advantage, as it grants the educator his/her monitor role and allows access to long-term evolution of students' language tests by means of records, transcripts or game logs provided by the used app. Equally important, the automated system of providing instant feedback is a time-saving strategy for teachers.

Short-term tests such as daily assignments may take a full day or even two days before the lecturer takes time to mark the papers. However, with gamification, each player's or student's actions will be relayed to the lecture immediately. Additionally, the feedback may be in the form of textual, bars, points, trophies medals and verbal thereby offering a broad analysis of the progress. (Spathopoulou, 2019, p.14)

Thirdly, in order to exploit the benefit of formative assessment that facilitates a post-evaluation proactive behaviour, gamified assessment must be selected with consideration regarding the *number of attempts and replaying features* that quizzes have. Giving learners the possibility to retake a quiz automatically grants them the responsibility for auto-correcting their errors and for rethinking the learning strategies they adopt. Compared to traditional assessment, digital evaluation through gamified apps also brings forth the tremendous opportunity of letting learners know their results immediately after taking the quiz. Surely, there are pros and cons to this aspect, as not all students are willing to motivate themselves towards improvement after finding themselves repeatedly in lower positions on the leaderboards.

Having considered the above-mentioned issues when using gamification as formative assessment sequences, teachers might need to draft and design a customized model of online evaluation even if they use widespread gamified quizzes and platform. Since technology does make possible the tailoring of assessment in accordance to mixed skills variety, to



different levels of language or to particular achievement tracks, one can opt for selecting the suitable gamified episode of evaluation based on two essential elements.

Namely, it is mandatory to *establish precise learning objectives* prior to creating gamified sequences of assessment, so as to provide continuity and matching between practiced and assessed structures. Moreover, when choosing a certain gamified app to support formative assessment, one important criterion should regard the *set of technological affordances* that the app has – feedback display as badges, leaderboards, possibility to interact synchronously and/or asynchronously, thus playing the game at one's own speed, individual or multiplayer capacities etc. The key to success lies in pairing the two criteria and managing to draw pedagogical connections, while balancing the gamified input with the practical output.

Objectives associated with knowledge and skill are both legitimate and required by nearly all curriculum standards. [...] teachers regularly address these types of objectives. As a result, it is instrumental to account for the manner in which students may learn from games as well as the ways to assess performance [...] educators are presented with the option of assessing learning as a result of interacting with the game or evaluating performance using the embedded technologies. In either case, the instructional paradigm and technological affordances bear significantly on the assessment practices. (Schrader, McCreery, 2012, p.20)

### **Gamified Quizzes – How to Play and Learn Competitively with Flashcards, Quizzes and Videos**

Among the varieties of gamification-based apps that can be used as alternative to traditional formative assessment both in the case of blended learning and in digital teaching processes, gamified quizzes tend to occupy a central part. Such quizzes share tremendous advantages such as widespread availability, diversity of choice in designing complex tests (from multiple choice to open cloze, scale or true/false questions), possibility to be played simultaneously and separately, or the type of feedback learners get and report logs for teachers to store evidence of achievement.

There are several free applications that could be used for formative assessment: Edmodo (LMS, exams, surveys, and indicators); Socrative (exams, surveys, gamification, indicators); Kahoot (quizzes gamification, surveys and indicators); Quizizz (quizzes and words, cultural games, etc.); Google Forms and Flubaroo (exams and indicators); Padlet; Mentimeter; Edpuzzle (video quiz could be integrated into Edmodo). Review of the previous studies in the literature [...] demonstrated that Kahoot application was used more frequently in gamification activities when compared to the other applications. (Göksüna, D., Gürsoy, 2019, p. 16)

The gamified quizzes selected for the current analysis-being those that have been commonly used throughout the semester – were Kahoot, Quizizz, Quizlet and TedEd videos. All the four mentioned gamification platforms have been used on a regular basis along the teaching process, with the purpose of making formative assessment more dynamic and engaging students to become active participants in the synchronous digital learning format.

If Kahoot and Quizizz appear to share more similarities, there are nonetheless some important differences that influence students' preference over one or another. Particularly, regarding the presentation of questions, the Kahoot user can only view answer options on their own screens and the main question may be projected or displayed on the teacher's screen, whereas with Quizizz participants get screen access to both questions and answers. In addition, the progression feature allows Quizizz respondents to complete a question and then pass on to the next one according to one's own pace, as compared to Kahoot users, who must wait until the other students complete their answers or until the allocated time slot is over.

Similarly, the way in which feedback is provided also makes a difference, as with Kahoot, learners are shown statistics of answers between the questions, while in the case of Quizizz each response-correct or incorrect – will generate a positive or a negative message. As to what regards the similarities, these include the type of questions that might be designed to sketch a gamified quiz – from multiple choice, slide, polls to open end and true or false ones and respectively they may include other formats-video, audio or image-based – to make the quiz more interactive.

The novelty introduced by Quizlet resides in the use of flashcards to organize content, which proves to be an excellent resource for teaching vocabulary and specific terminology in ESP classes. Providing two major functions – study and test, this gamified app allows learners to take digital quizzes and to solve card-matching tasks, while also providing feedback in the form of emojis and progress meters. Teachers, on the other hand, can store data related to the learners' progress by having the possibility to create classes and quantify results as well as visualize individual progress of language testing. Such an app can be easily customized to serve the purposes of testing and evaluating grammar structures and vocabulary, as well as focusing on the improvement of productive skills, as learners can also collaborate and develop the pre-created flashcards by adding their own examples/ definitions etc.

Eventually, the choice of TedEd videos as a recurrent format for gamified formative assessment came as a need to engage learners in making more use of their receptive skills combined with the productive ones. TedEd is a digital platform of creative lessons that allows teachers to structure

specific assignments around a video and assess students' engagement with the material. The format includes the video support –which may be one of the TedEd videos available in the platform library or any YouTube video – followed by a series of multiple choice or open-ended questions that mark the “Think” section of the customized lesson, a section for additional resources to encourage further exploration, entitled “Dig Deeper” and an interactive class discussion –the “Discuss” section.

Perhaps one of the most complex and dynamic gamified platform, TedEd lays the foundation for numerous other assignments while emphasizing students' creativity together with collaborative work by joining the Discuss section. In this respect, the use of TedEd as formative assessment tool pertains to evaluation of listening comprehension skills, as well as writing abilities paired with critical thinking approaches.

Since designing a complex sequence of gamified lessons implies consistent time efforts, a more affordable choice for ESP teachers is to embed one gamified quiz in each on-site or digital format class, both by conducting continuous formative assessment and for assigning the teaching process a more entertaining feature. Literature review is still not very accurate with regard to whether gamification-based learning has more long-term benefits than traditional formative assessment, especially since teachers and students are still at an experimental stage in completely online education formats. However, the current article was based on a premise stating that *gamified quizzes*, other than making classes more interactive and dwelling on the motivational side, facilitate *genuine engagement* in the learning process.

In probing the premise, we conducted a questionnaire with the purpose of identifying the students' attitude regarding the usefulness, purpose, limitations and advantages of gamified platforms (quiz-based ones) throughout their use of such learning tools in the ESP class during the second semester of 2020. The questionnaire consisted of 12 varied questions – true/false, a Linkert scale question, a Stapel scale question, a multiple choice one, Matrix table question, text questions and the specific demographic ones. However, because of the limited space, the current article will present an analysis of only specific questions, which makes the object of our topic.

The questionnaire was applied at the end of the semester to a sample population consisting of 50 undergraduate students enrolled in ESP classes. All respondents had previously worked in a traditional format throughout their ESP classes and have interacted with gamified quizzes on few occasions. During the recent remote digital learning session they have however been more frequently exposed to such formative assessment episodes, in some particular cases these quizzes being applied either weekly at the end of a synchronous interaction or as assigned homework.

The first section of the questionnaire, including questions to validate the data that students used and interacted with on gamified app platforms and to identify the most commonly used ones, mainly focused on *understanding learners' perception of the intentionality behind the frequent use of gamification* during ESP classes. The question “What was the purpose of using these gamified quizzes during your ESP classes?” aimed to visualize the way in which students approached these gamification sequences embedded in their learning sessions. Having designed the question in such a way as to allow the selection of two answers out of three choices, the results indicated two leading positions – “to explain and practice new vocabulary” – chosen by 54% of respondents and to “verify the use of acquired vocabulary skills” -36% of students, while the third one – “as brainstorming session” was selected by a mere 10%.

The answers indicate that learners could make a clear association between the nature and role of the gamified quiz, as the vast majority were aware that they were engaged in forms of assessment – either as practice, drills or evaluation formats. If in the traditional on-site teaching and learning format, assessment episodes are not really a desired section of the class, in the case of online learning, students were particularly keen on playing such games, which they claimed to find entertaining and beneficial for their practice of vocabulary.

Another relevant section of the questionnaire consisted in creating a perspective on what learners consider to be *strengths and weaknesses of app platforms for gamified assessment* using Kahoot, Quizizz, Quizlet and TedEd. Regarding the advantages, participants were invited to answer the following question: “What positive aspects did you identify while completing your tasks on the Kahoot, Quizlet, Ted Ed or Quizizz platforms?” The results indicated a certain order of strengths that learners identified as follows: vocabulary structures are verified in specific contexts, motivation to win, competitive booster and the fact that such apps provide prompt feedback and they are practical and call for use of multiple skills.

The mirror question – “What negative aspects did you identify while completing your tasks on the Kahoot, Quizlet, Ted Ed or Quizizz platforms?” rendered the following classification – the order of scale-based selection: increased difficulty of questions, limited time span for answering, final leaderboards, no direct social interaction, lack of practicality in the mobile app. Surprisingly perhaps, certain features of gamified apps that have been intended to be seen as strengths appear to be weaknesses in the eyes of surveyed learners. Particularly, if limited time span was meant to create a contest-like mood, it appears that it only increases assessment-specific

pressure just as the leaderboards creates a feeling of demotivation among participants, rather than fulfil its intended role of booster.

Furthermore, in order to determine learners to evaluate themselves and provide a retrospective on how gamification has helped them particularly, surveyed students were asked to answer the question “How did the quizzes help you improve your language practice?” The intention was *to verify if the choice of the four gamified assessment platforms was indeed proper and if learners managed to put the aimed skills to test* by partaking in these quizzes. Being a question that called for text answers, there were valuable testimonials to be considered, some of which will be indicated below:

“Such platforms helped me evaluate my own language acquisition progress, as well as fix vocabulary and new terms. Because they are competitive, I felt more relaxed in reviewing the notes because the prospect of evaluation based on gaming was not stressful.”

“TedEd was really helpful because it determined me to pursue continuous engagement. If initially I only watched the video for basic information, in order to solve the tasks and complete the discussion board, I had to watch it again and look for detailed information. I felt that this helped a lot with other listening strategies.”

“I was really encouraged by the funny memes shown by Quizizz after each question. I also learned how to deal with multiple choice answers and choose the correct one by eliminating the options that did not fit contextually. It made me think about specific examples for each option, so that I could cross them out.”

“I appreciated the anywhere and anytime feature of these apps, Kahoot in particular. By using mobile technology while learning I could better memorize the meaning of new terms, because I am a fast visual learner.”

Eventually, the following two questions were designed *to determine what factors influence students' engagement in gamified quiz-taking*. The former question – “To what extent do you consider that you can be motivated to pursue language learning based on the apps' achievement tracking system?” was meant to **check the relevance that such feedback systems** – scoreboard, leaderboards or positive/negative memes have in keeping learners engaged in the process of learning. The majority of students replied that they found such a system to be very relevant (37.3%) for their further engagement and respectively extremely relevant (33.35), while 19.6% of respondents mentioned they consider the achievement tracking system to be relatively important. Only 9.8% of respondents didn't find this system relevant, which means they either weren't influenced by such a leaderboards because they resort different motivating factors (reaching a higher level of language practice, getting a better grade etc.) or, on the contrary, they were deterred from engaging in other gamified episodes.

The latter question – “How often to you prefer to use Kahoot, TedEd, Quizlet and Quizizz in your ESP classes?” indicated that the **majority of students became fond of using these gamified apps** and expressed their intention to use them weekly, in each class (43.1%) and after the end of a structural unit (every 2 or 3 classes) (52.9%). The remaining respondents (4%) opted for using gamification through the mentioned platforms only at the end of the term, so as a means of summative assessment rather than formative one.

Consequently, the analysis of the questionnaire answers indicated that the initial premise was valid and that gamified assessment conducted via tech platforms does indeed stimulate students’ engagement in pursuing language learning throughout their digital classes. The association between entertainment, motivation and engagement of learners in a competitive game-based framework turns formative assessment into a pleasant learning activity, with consistent benefits for both learners and teachers. The instant response capabilities provided by apps such as Kahoot! And Quizizz cater for feasible and practical evaluation data, while at the same time the feedback that learners get is integral to overall formative assessment.

Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the limitations of using gamification as formative assessment – these being identified by students both in the questionnaire and signalled throughout the use of apps during classes. Such drawbacks refer to the difficulty of questions, limited time span for providing answers, necessity to utilize two technological devices (in the case of Kahoot!) or the tracking system perceived as demotivating by some learners. Surely, such weaknesses can be turned into opportunities in specific situations – adapting evaluated content according to users’ level, choosing an alternative means of assessment that does not show ranking etc.

Importantly though, the study also revealed an essential feature that makes gamified assessment worthy of being used on a regular basis in ESP classes. Namely, *learners developed self-study habits in the form of reviewing vocabulary, grammar or improving specific skills* –listening and writing in particular – which they nurtured by frequent and extended use of gamified apps. Numerous students claimed they chose to revise for their final exams by watching other TedEd videos than those presented in class and going through the guided lesson available on the platform because it helped them improve and practice their receptive skills. Similarly, with Quizlet, having access to a variety of flashcards meant to structure topic-based vocabulary, learners extended the use of such gamification structures in order to expand their knowledge and put their language skills to test.

## Conclusions

There are incontestable benefits to using gamification in the process of teaching and learning ESP, despite the limitations which are generally either technological or linked to the users' particular digital literacy or level of language usage. By customizing learning contexts and embedding formative assessment in gamified frameworks, teachers can fully expand the advantages of digital learning and create competitive study environments.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the (temporary) trend is towards fully digitalizing teaching and learning, such a phenomenon risks to plunder education in a realm of purely artificial mechanisms if the human element is not at the core of teaching. Customisation of the impressive variety of gamified apps can only be made possible with the help of creative teachers, who are willing to invest their originality in blending the accurate teaching of language skills with the proper digital instruments that serve the purpose of formative assessment. Assessment-centred approaches are vital to any efficient learning pattern and the opportunity to apply online formative assessment for the benefit of engaging learners along the process must surely be exploited.

What is more, with the uncertainty of ever going back to what we considered traditional on-site teaching, there is a stringent need to consider potential implications for the future. Other than adapting teaching frameworks and embracing blended learning as a mainstream instrument, we, teachers, might still impact the foreseeable development of the next digital native generations. To do so, we need to shift our teaching process into including soft skills along the integrated ones in the ESP class, as well as rethink the trajectory of teacher training and harness educational tech tools appropriately. Lastly, any digital educational endeavour must stem from the fact that the learning principle should be primary and technology should only remain the vehicle, so as to humanize a tech-based process that shapes minds and characters.

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# Benefits of ePortfolio Use in an ELP (English for Legal Purposes) Course Assessment

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**Abstract.** Assessment is a valuable, necessary instrument for the teacher from a double perspective: on the one hand it provides the student with a clear picture of his/her level of language on the other hand due to its backwash effect gives an indication to the teacher on the effectiveness of the methods, tasks, activities and materials used during a course. In order to accomplish its purpose evaluation should be used in different stages of a course and should employ various tools.

The current article focuses on ePortfolios used as a summative evaluation tool in an ELP course (English for Legal Purposes) at the Faculty of Law, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The reason for replacing the classical paper-written exam with an electronic assessment tool stays in the unprecedented teaching and learning situation caused by the 2019 SARS-COV2 pandemic. The benefits and the degree of satisfaction that the use of ePortfolios had on students were determined by analyzing the answers from a questionnaire filled in after completing a set of assignments. The selection of the items included in the ePortfolio was thought in order to address students' interest and learning goals: improvement of the main four skills together with the development of legal vocabulary and enhancement of presentation skills. The research tool involved in this study is an online questionnaire providing quantitative data collection.

**Keywords:** *summative assessment, ESP course, ELP, ePortfolios, undergraduate students.*

## Introduction

The current article focuses on a research problem related to students' assessment at the end of a regular ESP course in the context of the unprecedented situation caused by the 2019 SARS-COV2 pandemic when new norms of social distancing created a new paradigm of teaching by allowing online classes to predominate. Class instructors had to reconsider and adapt their teaching style, the way in which they provide feedback to their

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students and the evaluation tools involved. The study describes and analyses an ESP class where ePortfolios were used as an alternative form of assessment replacing the traditional evaluation formula<sup>2</sup> consisting of a written test that covered the use of reading, listening and writing skills. Taking the classical test turned out to be an unfeasible option because the university lacked a secure system for online testing.

The reason for approaching this issue is to establish if ePortfolios can be used as a single evaluation tool employed to ascertain students' level of specialised language in the four skills. In order to find that particular piece of information the current study tries to establish the advantages and disadvantages of using ePortfolios as a summative evaluation instrument by means of a feedback questionnaire.

This topic is important to investigate because the findings will offer further evidence regarding the benefits and the limitations of employing this type of student assessment at the end of an ESP course. Optimistically, the study will help teachers to expand knowledge and understanding of the topic in order to be better equipped to take relevant decisions concerning how to evaluate the level of specialized language knowledge at the end of an online course.

## **Literature review on ePortfolios**

According to education literature portfolios and then their e-version were traditionally used in order to measure learning and development over time (Barrett, 2000; Challis, 2005) sometimes providing an alternative type of assessment (Chang, 2001; Smith & Tillema, 2003; Smits et al., 2005; Wade et al., 2005) that moves away from summative assessment aiming to chart the development of students' thinking over their course of study.

If used to their full potential, portfolios have a number of benefits for students. Portfolios help "to focus student thinking" (Wade & Yarbrough, 1996), provide "a means to translate theory into practice" (Hauge, 2006) and, most importantly, "document a learner's progress over time" (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Challis, 2005; Smith & Tillema, 2003). They can "enhance students' communication and organizational skills, are a way of identifying and recognising prior learning and lead to new learning outcomes" (Brown, 2002).

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<sup>2</sup> According to Babes-Bolyai University's Language policy, undergraduate students have to attend English for Specific Purposes classes in the first academic year in order to be able to conduct research in their specialized area and communicate with international members of the same professional community.

Through the process of portfolio construction, “students gain a broader sense of what they are learning” (Young, 2002). They “can see their learning developing” (Darling, 2001), “acquire an awareness of their accomplishments and come to understand how their learning takes place” (Brown, 2002). Darling (2001) highlights one important point however: that while students view portfolios as the creation process, evaluators see portfolios as the end product.

An important stage in portfolio construction is to make some decisions about why to construct a portfolio, how to approach it, what work samples to include and what happens after it is completed (Zeichner & Wray, 2001). Adapting Zeichner and Wray’s argument, several important questions came out (Butler, 2006):

1. What is the purpose of the portfolio: for learning, for assessment, for professional development or for employment reasons?
2. Who decides what should be included in a portfolio: the student compiling the portfolio or the class teacher/employer? How binding should guidelines for creating a portfolio be?
3. How should the pieces of evidence in a portfolio be organized: around topics, around curricular aims or around achievement standards?
4. What work samples are acceptable as pieces of evidence? What should be included in the portfolio?
5. What kind of input should teachers have throughout the process of constructing a portfolio? Should there be a lot of involvement or just a little?
6. How should the portfolio be assessed: through very specific evaluation criteria and grading rubrics or a more general pass-fail system?
7. What should happen to the portfolio after it is finished: should there be some kind of presentation of students’ work?

The current study will take into account these questions in the methodology stage when describing the structure of the ePortfolio that students were asked to accomplish.

As any other tool used in assessment, portfolios might arise a variety of problems that could affect their validity by creating student confusion and anxiety about the aim, nature and value of the task (Darling, 2001; Wade and Yarbrough, 1996). The elements that could have a negative impact on this type of evaluation are lack of well-defined guidelines and a clear structure (Smith & Tillema, 2003) and a lack of examples of past portfolios (Darling, 2001).

From consideration of the above problems and issues, several criteria for the successful use of portfolios have been put forward (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995; Smith & Tillema, 2003; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996).

In essence, the success criteria are (Butler, 2006):

1. Familiarity with the portfolio concept, including an understanding of both the process and the product of portfolio construction;
2. Clear framework and guidelines;
3. Structure tempered with freedom for creativity;
4. Feedback during the evidence collection process;
5. Understanding of the value of reflection;
6. Understanding of the value of the portfolio for future use, such as employment;
7. Motivation to learn and achieve good marks;
8. Student ownership of the portfolio;
9. Making connections between the portfolio content and the outside life of the student;
10. Sense of achievement at overcoming initial struggles to understand the portfolio.

In the last decade as teaching embraced technology in classroom surroundings the place of classical portfolios was taken by their electronic counterpart. In literature they are seen as an electronic version of a paper-based portfolio, created in an electronic environment and incorporating not just text but graphic, audio and video material as well (Butler, 2006). Challis (2005, online) provides a more in-depth definition by describing an ePortfolio as:

1. "Selective and structured collections of information gathered for specific purposes and showing one's accomplishments and growth, which are stored digitally and managed by appropriate software
2. Developed by using appropriate multimedia and customarily within a web environment and retrieved from a website or delivered by CD-ROM or by DVD."

While electronic portfolios may be a technological change, but not a conceptual change, from paper portfolios (Barrett & Knezek, 2003; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005), they still have several characteristics that differ from traditional portfolios. Challis (2005), Abrami and Barrett (2005) and Strudler and Wetzel (2005) have all provided a variety of points of difference, which can be summarized as it follows:

- Are easier to search, and records can be simply retrieved, manipulated, refined and reorganized;
- Are more complete;
- Can use more extensive material;
- Include pictures, sound, animation, graphic design and video;
- Are much smaller;
- Are cost effective to distribute;

- Are instantly accessible;
- Are easy to carry and share with other people;
- Allow fast feedback;
- Provide access to a global circulation if they are based on the web.

As with traditional paper-based portfolios, several issues and challenges arise with the use of electronic portfolios. Abrami and Barrett (2005) discuss the challenges to assessment that electronic portfolios present. Their concern is that it is difficult to validate the evidence in such a portfolio – is it really the work of the student in question? This issue will be addressed in the current study as a major concern not only for teachers but also for students.

According to Miller (2009,8) good ePortfolio practice” always includes metacognition-having students reflect on their work and think about their progress in learning”. Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000, 18) think that metacognition “can enhance student achievement and develop in students the ability to learn independently”.

Unfortunately, the interest of educational researchers in Romania regarding the use of language e-portfolios in higher education is deficient, most of the studies focusing on high school rather than higher education. For this reason, the current article couldn't use relevant data from other Romanian sources, data that might give a broader perspective on this issue.

## **Research methodology**

As previously stated at the beginning of the research paper the purpose of the current study is to find out if ePortofolios can be used as a single evaluation tool for assessing students' level of specialized language use in the four skills at the end of an ESP course. It is designed as a closed cohort study which involves a number of participants who entered into the study at one defining point in time with the possibility to exit but presumably no possibility to bring new people in the group. This last feature could be seen as a limitation of the research as the number of the students who answered the questionnaire decreased in the end. It is a prospective study as it uses new data collected for this purpose.

The targeted group of responders included 140 first year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Law, Babes-Bolyai University from which 97 were female and 43 were male. Out of them only 54 sent their answers back.

The background of the study is provided by the Babes-Bolyai University language policy which states that all students need to attend a specialized foreign language course in their field of study in the freshman

year. At the end of the first year they take a proficiency test intended to prove their competency in using specific specialized language. The group of students participating in the study attended English for Legal Purposes classes as they were enrolled at the Faculty of Law.

Because of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic testing needed to be replaced with another type of assessment that could be adapted to the lockdown situation. Electronic portfolios provided that opportunity as they could be designed to include student work samples in the four targeted skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

The time allocated for portfolio completion was two months.

The study was based on quantitative data collected by means of an online survey shared on a web link. The survey used a Google forms questionnaire with ten items. Responses were automatically turned into pie charts, diagrams, and statistics.

In order to encourage students' participation in taking the survey and minimize possible problems with understanding the meaning of the questions the questionnaire was written in Romanian.

It consisted of 9 items out of which 5 required YES/NO answers, 3 required multiple choice answers with measurement scales provided and one required a longer response.

## Description

Shortly after the decision to use ePortfolios as an assessment tool was taken some important questions emerged (Butler, 2006) that required some answers:

1. "What is the purpose of the portfolio: for learning, for assessment, for professional development or for employment reasons?"

*The aim of the ePortfolio is for assessment meant to conclude the students' language course.*

2. "Who decides what should be included in a portfolio: the student compiling the portfolio or the class teacher/employer? How binding should guidelines for creating a portfolio be?"

*The content of the ePortfolio is decided by the teacher. For the listening, reading and writing skills students are asked to produce a set of three tasks per each skill. The tasks have a graded level of difficulty. For the speaking section students have to send a short record in which they express their opinion on a given situation. In addition, students attend a live Zoom session in which they are asked to discuss some topics they studied throughout the semester.*

3. "How should the pieces of evidence in the portfolio be organized: around topics, around curricular aims or around achievement standards?"

*The pieces of evidence are organized around achievement standards as the students are required to achieve a minimum B1 level of language competence in all four skills.*

4. "What work samples are acceptable as pieces of evidence? What should be included in the portfolio?"

*There are accepted as work samples the sets of tasks required for each skill. The types of tasks include true and false sentences, fill in the blanks, note taking, multiple choice, writing letters and emails.*

5. "What kind of input should teachers have throughout the process of constructing a portfolio? Should there be a lot of involvement or just a little?"

*There were two phases of teacher input and involvement: in the beginning when instructions were given and while working when the teacher offered support through email or via Messenger. The teacher intervened as often as students required providing needed information, prompting where necessary and suggesting planning approaches for the writing tasks.*

6. "How should the portfolio be assessed: through very specific evaluation criteria and grading rubrics or a more general pass-fail system?"

*The decision how to assess the portfolio was taken in concordance with its aim namely, to provide summative evaluation. Therefore, objectivity in grading was a necessary element and this implied very specific evaluation criteria. The listening and reading tasks were accompanied by answer keys while the writing and speaking ones were marked according to a list of set descriptors linked to the CEFR levels.*

7. "What should happen to the portfolio after it is finished: should there be some kind of presentation of students' work?"

*No presentation is required.*

Part of a teacher's preparation for implementing this type of evaluation included considering things to do in order to avoid a negative impact on the whole process. According to Smith & Tillema (2003) and Darling (2001) "two of the possible problems that could alter the portfolios' validity are generated by a lack of clear guiding principles/structure and a lack of examples of past portfolios". In addition, students in Darling's (2001) study were concerned with the subjectivity of evaluation. All these issues were addressed in the feedback questionnaire in order to check if those problems were avoided.



Another concern was related to the fact that reflection on learning could have been limited by the decision to indicate what pieces of work to be included in the ePortfolio. This type of teacher intervention regarding what to include in the end product is not very common as portfolios/ePortfolios are mainly used in order to nurture independent learning and reflection on own progress but it was necessary in order to provide a clear picture of the language proficiency at that particular time.

The last worry was related to the difficulty of validating the evidence in such a portfolio – was it really the work of the student in question? This issue is obviously related to the ethics of academic learning and research, a topic that should be gradually introduced to the students in order to make them aware of the crucial importance that an honest approach has on academic work.

As stated in the beginning, the purpose of the current study is to find out if ePortfolios are an effective evaluation tool for assessing students' level of specialized language use in the four skills at the end of a course. Related to this aim two other issues should be taken into consideration namely, the degree of satisfaction related to this type of assessment (a fact that is beneficial not only for the course but also for the students' perception towards learning) and students' perception towards portfolio assessment.

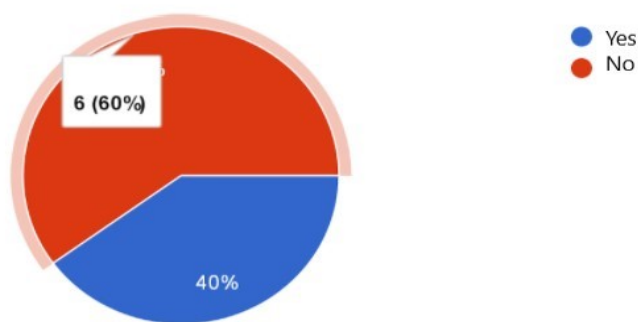
In order to collect relevant information an online questionnaire is used with the following questions:

1. Have you ever been evaluated through ePortfolios in your language class?
3. Do you think that the tasks in your ELP ePortfolio are clearly formulated?
4. Do they cover the assessment of the four language skills?
5. Did you have enough time to fulfill them?
6. Do you think that ePortfolios are an accurate tool for assessing language knowledge?
7. In your opinion, what are the drawbacks of this type of assessment?
8. How would you rate the degree of satisfaction related to this type of assessment and your ELP ePortfolio?
9. What contributed most to your satisfaction while completing your language ePortfolio?
  - reduced level of stress
  - I can work at my own pace
  - I can work without teacher's guidance and the teacher trusts me
  - It better reflects my language knowledge
  - I can reflect on my learning progress while doing the tasks
10. If you were to choose a type of evaluation after an online course what would that be: a test, an ePortfolio or a combination of the two?

## Results and analysis

The first question “Have you ever been evaluated through ePortfolios in your language class?” has the aim to find out the students’ degree of familiarity with this type of evaluation tool. Relevant opinions from literature link the possible non-fulfillment of tasks with a lack of examples of past portfolios (Darling, 2001).

Have you ever been evaluated through ePortfolios in your language class?



**Fig. 1.** Questionnaire results for the question  
“Have you ever been evaluated through ePortfolios in your language class?”

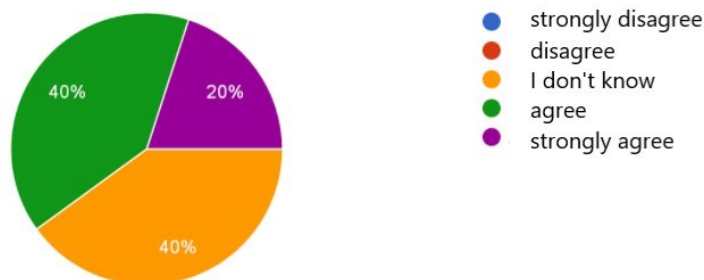
The answers to this question reveal that for 60% of the responders the use of ePortfolios was not a common practice in their language class.

The next three questions are meant to check if the possible problems created by the lack of familiarity with this type of assessment could be overcome by offering proper guidance.

The answers to the question “Do you think that the tasks in your ELP ePortfolio are clearly formulated?” show that an amazing 100% responded with Yes. To the question “Do they cover the assessment of the four language skills?” 90% of the students answered with Yes. One hundred percent of the responders consider that there was enough time allocated for task completion.

The following question was asked in order to reveal the degree to which ePortfolios are perceived by students as an accurate tool for assessing their language knowledge. A large majority of 20% (strongly agree) and 40% (agree) see it as a reliable tool whereas 40% don’t have an opinion on that.

Do you think that ePortfolios are an accurate tool for assessing language knowledge?



**Fig. 2.** Questionnaire results for the question  
“Do you think that ePortfolios are an accurate tool for assessing language knowledge?”

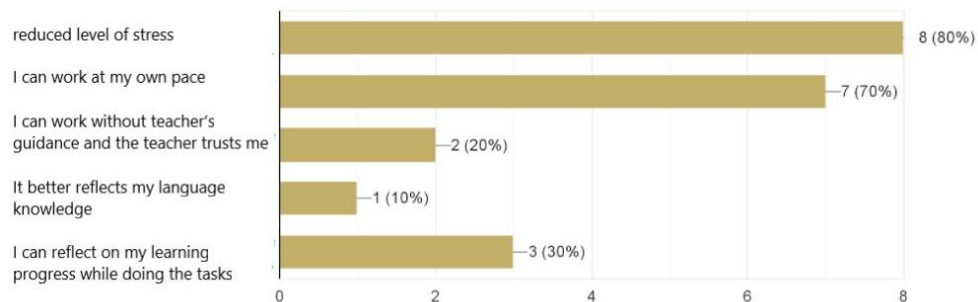
Connected to this last question there is a follow-up one that aims to see students' opinion related to the drawbacks of this type of assessment. As this item requires longer answers here are some of them:

- “ePortfolios are not the usual type of evaluation used in our profession. We as legal practitioners are required to take exams and in that context the results might be different. The point is I'm not sure if my score for completing a language portfolio would match the score of a language test.”
- “I don't see any drawback”
- “I don't know if we can trust all students for completing the tasks on their own”
- “There is the possibility that many students didn't work on their own to do the tasks. If this evaluation is not accompanied by an additional one (like a test, for example) then it might not reflect students' knowledge at all”.

However, the degree of satisfaction related to this type of assessment is quite good as 30% of the responders answered they are very satisfied and 50% are quite satisfied.

In order to highlight the areas that are considered as a source of fulfillment, the questionnaire offered 5 possibilities out of which 3 got the best scores: reduced level of stress 80%; working at his/her own pace 70%; reflecting on own progress while doing the tasks 30%.

What contributed most to your satisfaction while completing your language ePortfolio?

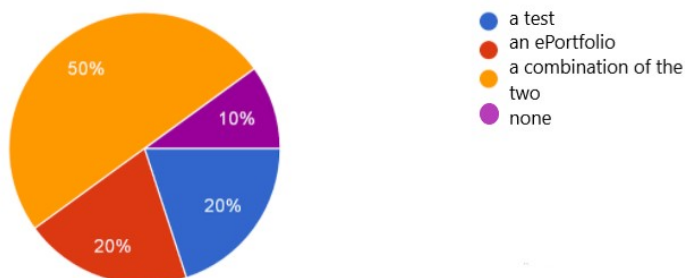


**Fig. 3.** Questionnaire results for the question

*“What contributed most to your satisfaction while completing your language ePortfolio?”*

The last question “If you were to choose a type of evaluation after an online course what would that be: a test, an ePortfolio or a combination of the two?” has the following results: 50% of the students answered that a combination of ePortfolio with a test would be the best option, 20% are in favor of a test, 20% in favor of ePortfolios while a 10% don't express any option.

If you were to choose a type of evaluation after an online course what would that be?



**Fig. 4.** Questionnaire results for the question

*“If you were to choose a type of evaluation after an online course what would that be?”*

The analysis of the given responses provides the following set of information: most students are not familiarized with this type of evaluation, a fact that could be problematic for task fulfillment on one hand but beneficial for the study on the other as their opinions are not biased by previous (possible) negative experiences.

Teacher's intention to provide clear guidelines, relevant tasks and allow enough time for task completion is achieved as most students agree to that.

The common perception is that ePortfolios are an accurate, efficient tool for assessing language knowledge although 49% are not sure about that. In order to see what elements are perceived as a disadvantage, students were asked to express their opinion. According to them one fact that is not only problematic but can affect the reliability of the ePortfolios as an evaluation instrument is the lack of ethics in doing the tasks. In other words, is the collection of work samples really the work of that student?

However, the general feeling towards this evaluation is a positive one as it is not associated with a high level of stress; it allows students to work according to their particular learning style, at their own pace and enhances reflection on the learning process.

The fact that fairness of assessment is a very important issue for the participants in the study is underlined by their choice to use a combination of test plus portfolio when it comes to summative evaluation.

## Conclusions

The current study is the result of teaching an ELP language course under unusual circumstances. The outbreak of the SARS-COV2 pandemic in March 2020 in Romania turned the usual face to face classes into online ones. This situation required an adaptation not only of the teaching format but also of the summative assessment. The English for Special Purposes department took the decision to replace the classical proficiency test given at the end of an academic year with a collection of student work structured as an ePortfolio.

The study is performed on a homogenous group of 140 first year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Law from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Some possible limitations of the study are related to the number of the participants (54 out of 140 in the initial group) which is quite low and to the fact that all of them belong to the same faculty; therefore the results apply to students attending the Faculty of Law.

However, the findings could give a hint to those teachers who are interested in using ePortfolios in summative assessment in their classes about the perception that students have about it and about the learning benefits derived from that.

Most students appreciate the fact that ePortfolios are a less stressful form of evaluation that gives them the possibility to apply their own learning style and pace allowing metacognition processes such as reflection to take

place. It can be inferred that a main benefit could be the development of the ability to learn and work independently.

As resulted from the study, a serious drawback that has been exposed is related to the ethical aspect. Solo work on given tasks might tempt students to look for help from various sources reducing their personal contribution to a minimum. In order to avoid such practices, the process of using ePortfolios should be carefully prepared by the teacher and time should be allocated for discussions about the philosophy behind this type of student product and the ethics of academic work.

The starting point of the study was to establish if ePortfolios can be used as a single evaluation tool employed to determine students' level of specialized language in the four skills. Taking into consideration students' opinion this type of assessment instrument should be doubled by testing in order to give fair results.

Nevertheless, it certainly provides benefits for learners as it is associated with reduced level of stress and self-supporting learning.

A useful follow-up to the study could be a more extensive survey that involves all freshmen in Babes-Bolyai University. Responses could be contrasted and compared with the findings discussed so far and common guidelines could be established for all the language practitioners in the institution who wish to use this type of assessment.

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# Las competencias de la alfabetización electrónica y destrezas de producción multimodal en secundaria en los contextos donde existen lenguas en contacto

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**Resumen.** La comunicación mediada por dispositivos ha variado las prácticas de la escritura en los diferentes planos lingüísticos. La escritura digital ha facilitado el surgimiento de comunidades sociales particulares que rompen una sociedad mono-cultural, incluso han surgido géneros discursivos nuevos, competencias digitales en los contextos educativos con registros diferentes. El perfil cognitivo de los estudiantes a la hora de escribir también ha supuesto un gran cambio. Estas diferencias nos llevan a destacar las competencias de la alfabetización electrónica y, por tanto, una nueva construcción de destrezas de producción multimodal. Es por esto que resulta interesante estudiar las características que vertebran el lenguaje digital en contextos donde existen lenguas en contacto. Es importante ver la capacidad de vertebrar la escritura digital, qué particularidades tiene y cómo puede desarrollarse en contextos en los que dos lenguas se encuentran en contacto. Describir cómo se desenvuelven y si existe alguna diferencia a la hora de practicar la escritura digital versus la analógica en la producción de textos, en el procesamiento estratégico y en la relación de tareas durante la etapa de Educación Secundaria.

**Palabras clave:** *alfabetización, lenguas en contacto, escritura digital.*

## Introducción. Presentación de la investigación

Esta investigación surge en el contexto de elaboración de la tesis que versa sobre creencias en el aprendizaje de la escritura digital en los alumnos de secundaria. El presente estudio se llevó a cabo en el colegio *Escolapias Gandia* de Valencia, es un centro que ha implantado las tabletas como herramientas en el aula desde el 2014. Estamos hablando de un contexto digitalizado donde se implanta un Plan Estratégico llamado *iEEG* (iPad ESO

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Escolapias Gandia) en Secundaria. Todo esto para iniciar un cambio metodológico basado en el aprendizaje por proyectos que utiliza las tabletas como herramientas TIC o vehículo de conexión y contenedor de recursos educativos.

El contexto en el que situamos la investigación se relaciona con el uso de dos lenguas en contacto: el valenciano y el castellano; con unos programas bilingües marcados y con un Plan de normalización cuyo enfoque didáctico va dirigido a la integración normalizada de la lengua.

El centro dispone del *Plan de Normalización Lingüística* por el Consejo Escolar desde el 2005 y en los ámbitos de incidencia del *Plan Anual de Normalización Lingüística* se encuentran los espacios administrativos y sociales: documentos oficiales, económicos, comunicaciones orales, símbolos externos. En el espacio académico o de gestión pedagógico se tiene como objetivo la planificación educativa, el refuerzo y seguimiento y control de gestión pedagógico, así como en el espacio de interrelación didáctica, con la actuación del profesorado fuera del aula, materiales didácticos, además del espacio de interrelación con el entorno socio-familiar del centro, es decir, comunicaciones orales y escritas en valenciano.

El objetivo es privilegiar los usos comunicativos que de forma habitual no utilizan el valenciano en textos escolares y extraescolares. Todas estas actuaciones se reflejan en el Proyecto Educativo del centro, boletines de notas, RRI (Reglamento de régimen interno), faltas de asistencia, todo esto a lo largo del curso. Con esto se han estado utilizando en valenciano y de manera progresiva los documentos que figuran en castellano para potenciar la comunicación oral y escrita. Para conseguirlo se han elaborado documentos bilingües durante todo el curso. Entre los objetivos se encuentra la incorporación progresiva de material didáctico en valenciano en el resto de asignaturas y tutoría, también el incremento de actividades. Otra de las actuaciones en el Plan ha sido incrementar la biblioteca de aula en libros de lectura en valenciano, incrementar los materiales tutoriales y, en la interrelación alumno-profesor continuar fomentando el uso de la lengua. En definitiva, un plan que tiene como objetivo que el valenciano sea lengua de uso habitual en todas las actividades como: atención al público, actividades extraescolares, reuniones de padres y atención al público.

En secundaria, el centro aplica desde el 2013 los siguientes Programas de Educación Bilingüe PEV (Programa de Ensenyament en Valencià) y el PIP (Programa de Incorporación Progresiva) cada uno con una unidad en cada curso desde 1º a 4º de ESO. Así pues, en la PGA (Programa General de Aula) constan las horas impartidas en las áreas no lingüísticas en castellano y el número de horas de las áreas no lingüísticas impartidas en valenciano en cada una de los programas PEV y PIP.

## **El bilingüismo en la Comunidad Valenciana**

El bilingüismo podría considerarse como la habilidad humana general que permite almacenar códigos lingüísticos y utilizar indistintamente uno u otro. Estos alumnos de secundaria tienen asignaturas con las dos lenguas oficiales, y en principio los alumnos dominan las dos lenguas. Se trataría de bilingües equilibrados

No todos los alumnos tienen la misma competencia lingüística en las dos lenguas por lo que el dominio no es el mismo y siempre se anteponen más unas destrezas en una lengua que en otra (Chireac & Román Sanchis, 2019).

Como comentaron Siguan & Vila (1991) el bilingüismo perfecto es casi inexistente y las personas bilingües tienen una lengua dominante con la que se identifican, consideran que la dominan mejor y la usan frecuentemente y esta suele coincidir con la familiar o propia; por este motivo, el bilingüismo más equilibrado es el que proviene de la infancia y concretamente antes de los tres años, si se usa de forma continuada. Las diferencias entre las personas bilingües respecto al uso que hacen de las lenguas en que son competentes dependen de la situación social de las lenguas. Considera que se mantienen separados los códigos cuando se emplea la lengua X o Y y lo hace espontáneamente sin elegir de forma consciente, es decir, pasan de una a la otra sin alternar los códigos, sin esfuerzo aparente. Transmiten una serie de significados comprendidos a través de la lengua X mediante la lengua Y (Siguan & Vila, 1991).

Al hablar de bilingüismo estamos necesariamente ante un caso de contacto de lenguas en la Comunidad Valenciana.

La adquisición de una L2 facilita el aprendizaje de otras lenguas e incluye un pensamiento nuevo, una forma diferente de aprender y organizar el conocimiento. Existe un consenso entre investigadores en torno a que el conocimiento de dos lenguas y sus perspectivas ofrecen a los alumnos bilingües una base más diversificada y flexible en el área cognitiva con respecto a los monolingües. Si recordamos a Vygotsky (1984) el lenguaje es el mediador que guía los procesos cognitivos y forma socialmente al individuo. Díaz (1985) afirma que un profundo conocimiento de dos lenguas enriquece la conciencia metalingüística del niño, lo que constituye un componente imprescindible en el desarrollo de la inteligencia.

Un individuo que ha interiorizado dos lenguas en una comunidad y con presencia efectiva de ambas, cuenta con unas posibilidades mentales que permiten la alternancia entre dos sistemas de reglas en la manipulación de signos. A esta ventaja cognitiva se le añade, la ventaja social, es decir, la facilidad de relacionarse con monolingües.

## Alfabetización y escritura digital

El sentido de estar alfabetizado ha variado, así como históricamente se relacionaba con el conocimiento del alfabeto, su significado ha ido modificando según cada época y cultura (Goldin, Kriscautzky & Perelman, 2013). Los autores comentan que la alfabetización se concibe como un largo proceso de construcción de conocimiento más amplio que el de las letras, se trata del conocimiento de las funciones sociales de la escritura, de las prácticas asociadas a estas y las pautas que rigen sus intercambios mediados por la escritura. Destacan cómo las prácticas sociales del lenguaje, tanto orales como escritas cambian con el tiempo. La escuela es centro de interés de estas prácticas sociales relacionadas con el lenguaje, por tanto, uno de sus propósitos debe ser iniciar a los jóvenes en esta cultura escrita. Es evidente que con las TIC se comparte y se produce esta información escrita. Goldin, Kriscautzky & Perelman (2013) remarcan que inculcar esta cultura escrita no consiste solo en incorporar los mismos ejercicios en formato digital.

Algo que parece trascendente es lo que comenta Terceiro, 1998 (citado por Díaz Noci, 2000), y es que en el mundo digital el medio ya no es el mensaje porque este puede corporizarse de formas distintas teniendo la misma información. Ya Birkets, 1999 (citado por Díaz Noci, 2000), decía que las palabras en la pantalla parecen llegar a otro lugar colectivo, que es más profundo y auténtico que la propia subjetividad del escritor. Llega a comentar que se traspasa cierto poder del escritor a la máquina. Por tanto, nos podríamos preguntar si ese poder traspasado a la máquina, y por consiguiente incontrolado por los docentes en cuestión, ha podido provocar que no se haya podido construir el suficiente conocimiento didáctico sobre cómo enfrentarse a la escritura digital. Terceiro considera que cuando se maneja información en la escritura digital se abusa de la reproducción (citado por Díaz Noci, 2000). Probablemente ese abuso derive de la falta de recursos del docente sobre didáctica para mediar en la escritura digital.

Habría que destacar también como dice Cassany (2003) que el perfil cognitivo de los escritores ha cambiado ya que descargan las tareas más mecánicas en el dispositivo electrónico para concentrarse en la estrategia comunicativa.

Engenström (2001) nos habla de un nuevo modelo formativo, el llamado aprendizaje expansivo, que se da en un sistema de actividad en el que, a partir de un objeto, el aprendizaje se construye sobre las interrelaciones de una comunidad de aprendizaje, de ese modo se construye de forma colectiva y se acuerda según las reflexiones desarrolladas por el grupo. De manera que este puede plasmarse en un escrito, en una presentación oral, es

decir, se sedimenta el aprendizaje y el conocimiento. La actividad de la comunidad de aprendizaje en red ocurre no solo en lo discursivo, sino también en elementos culturales que da sentido a sus miembros. La actividad del sistema se reestructura continuamente y eso permite la adaptabilidad.

Según Martínez & Martínez (2017) en esta teoría de la actividad el sujeto se integra en un sistema de actividad junto al objeto y a los otros participantes. Además, de los instrumentos mediadores, las reglas y la distribución del trabajo y los roles en un todo unificado e incorporar tanto el aspecto productivo orientado al objeto como el aspecto comunicativo orientado a la persona. Este sistema se organiza deliberadamente a través del diseño de actividades y la distribución de roles entre los participantes, mediada por artefactos simbólicos, y regula la interacción focalizada en la tarea por medio de un conjunto de restricciones que operan en el sistema. (Martínez & Martínez, 2017, p. 101).

Pero a pesar de esta nueva realidad y fuerte evolución de las TIC estos autores consideran que en estos espacios no se han producido cambios que puedan suponer un cambio significativo en las prácticas docentes. Como dicen Martínez & Martínez (2017) existe un divorcio entre las potencialidades de las TIC incorporadas a las aulas y la modificación de los procesos pedagógicos.

Si nos situamos en el contexto de la comunicación mediatizada los adolescentes interactúan con los medios, escriben, escuchan y comparten vídeos. Estas son nuevas habilidades que equipos de investigación de proyectos como *Transmedia Literacy* definen como competencias transmedia. Esto significa que internet media en muchas ocasiones la representación del conocimiento, y la conducta de estos adolescentes para comunicarse; por otro lado, esto es una muestra de que las prácticas emergentes se van apropiando las TIC de manera significativa en las vidas y comunicaciones cotidianas (Livinstone, 2004).

La Competencia Transmedia (transmedia skills) se define como una serie de habilidades relacionadas con la producción, intercambio y consumo de medios interactivos digitales. Todas estas competencias van desde los procesos de resolución de problemas en videojuegos, producción e intercambio de contenidos en plataformas redes sociales, creación, producción, intercambio crítico de contenido narrativo que para los adolescentes forma parte de este universo (Scolari, 2018, p. 17).

Se han propuesto muchos conceptos para nombrar estas nuevas formas de alfabetismo: alfabetismo digital (*digital literacy*), alfabetismo en internet (*internet literacy*) o alfabetismo en los nuevos medios (*new media literacy*) (Scolari, 2018).

Para autores como Black, Castro & Lin (2015) los entornos formales siguen siendo relevantes y los informales adquieren cada vez más

importancia, ya que consideran que tienen un papel crucial en la educación actual de nuestros jóvenes. Estos se encuentran en una era digital en la que son autodidactas, formando así comunidades culturales a través de las redes sociales fuera de nuestras aulas.

Investigaciones como las del proyecto *Transmedia Literacy desarrollaron una taxonomía de competencias transmedia. Todas ellas competencias relacionadas con la producción en un contexto de la cultura transmedia. Se clasificaron 44 competencias de primer nivel, es decir principales de unas 134 y unas 190 secundarias; todas ellas organizadas en las siguientes dimensiones: producción, prevención de riesgos, performance, gestión social, individual y de contenidos; medios y tecnología, ideología y ética; narrativa y estética*. Todas estas dimensiones se organizaron desde la escritura hasta las producciones multimodales con prácticas críticas y actitudes cognitivas y pragmáticas (Scolari, 2018).

Lo que destaca Scolari (2018) es que el alfabetismo transmedia no se limitaría solo a prácticas participativas, sino a generar contenidos y usar las estrategias informales en los entornos digitales y las investigaciones deberían beneficiarse de estas competencias para aplicarlo en el sistema educativo formal y por qué no esto incluiría a la escritura digital.

Estas diferencias nos acercan a un camino de implicaciones pedagógicas donde Shetzer & Warschauer (2000) establecen lo que denominan *competencias de la alfabetización electrónica*: la comunicación o destrezas de interacción con los diferentes géneros discursivos, la construcción de destrezas de producción multimodales y la lectura e investigación, es decir la capacidad de navegar y reflexionar de forma crítica.

La vía digital hoy no es solo una fuente de información donde acude una parte de los alumnos y docentes, es el canal en el que se produce el conocimiento actual (Chenoll, 2018), es por esto que propone que se le debe prestar atención desde el punto de vista del proceso cognitivo. El nuevo paradigma es virtual y la escuela debe guiar a los jóvenes a ser competentes en el uso no solo de herramientas digitales, sino también para manejar y crear conocimiento (Garzón, 2016).

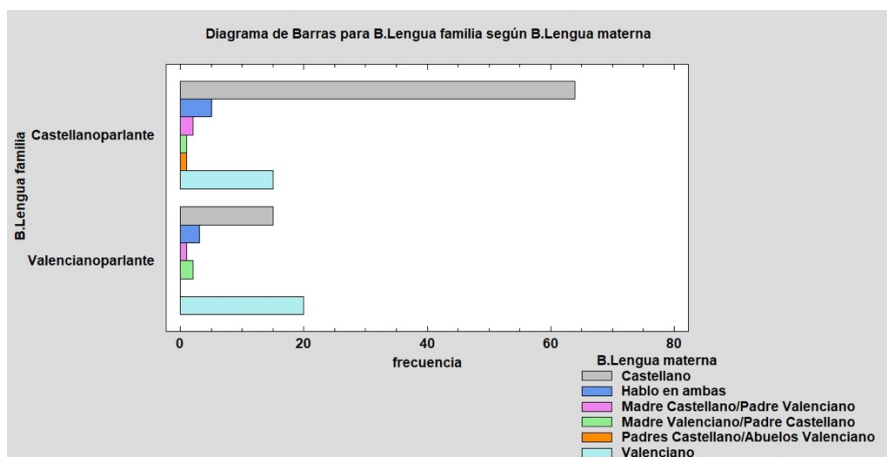
La escritura mediada por las nuevas tecnologías constituye una práctica vernácula aceptada por los jóvenes porque la red les ofrece entornos auténticos para mejorar vínculos y desarrollar trabajo colaborativo, además brinda la posibilidad de crear conocimientos significativos. En este caso la escritura digital la considera un soporte de aprendizaje autónomo que facilita la producción de textos, ya que ofrecen viabilidad a nuevas formas de escribir (Garzón, 2016).

## Metodología y desarrollo

El perfil de los 130 alumnos era un perfil de alumnos que había aprendido con las tabletas como mínimo 3 cursos escolares, es decir, tienen un conocimiento de la herramienta y han podido desarrollar estrategias de aprendizaje frente a la escritura digital. Por otro lado, son alumnos que como hemos mencionado anteriormente, o bien tienen como lengua materna el castellano o el valenciano, pero usan como lengua vehicular el valenciano; un total de estos el 46,6% son mujeres y el 53,4% hombres y por último las edades se encuentran entre los 13 y 16 años.

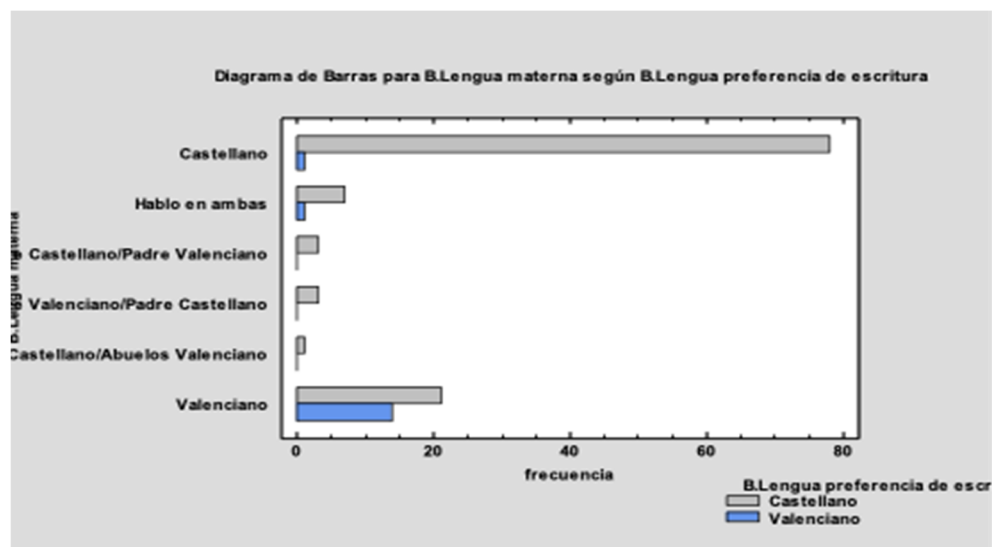
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evidencia în la imagen 1 que los alumnos que tenían como lengua familiar el castellano la lengua materna que predominaba era el castellano, mientras que los que tenían la lengua familiar el valenciano está más equilibrado el uso de ambas lenguas. Ya que, del 31,78% el 15,5% coincidiría la lengua materna con la lengua familiar.



*Imagen 2. Lengua materna y familiar de los sujetos analizados*

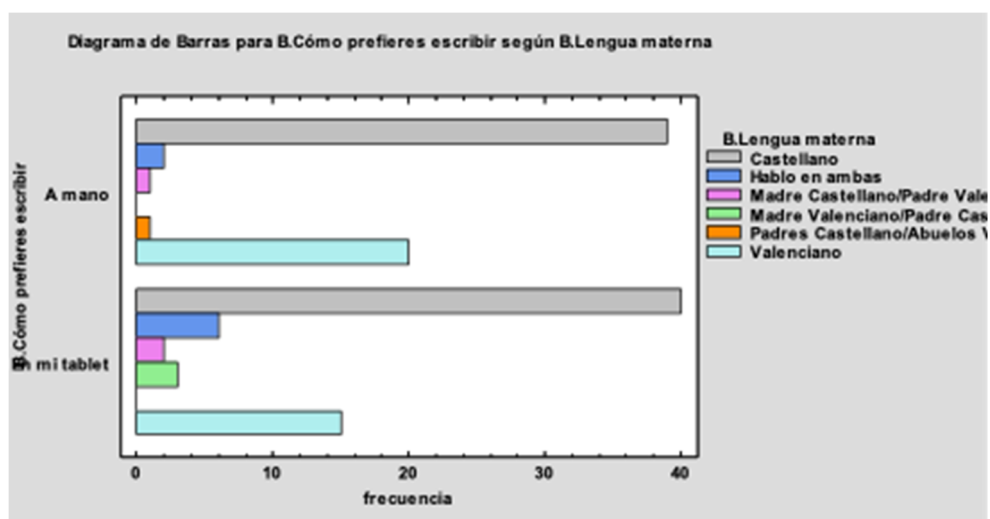
Una de las consideraciones que se tuvieron en cuenta era saber la lengua de preferencia de los alumnos a la hora de escribir. Comparando el uso de las lenguas, la preferencia de los alumnos se concluye en la Imagen 3.



*Imagen 3. Lengua de preferencia a la hora de escribir*

Es decir, los alumnos castellanoparlantes prefieren la escritura en castellano, y aunque la mayoría de los alumnos valencianoparlantes también prefieren escribir en valenciano existe un equilibrio en la frecuencia del número de alumnos, es decir, no existe tanta diferencia a la hora de escoger la lengua de preferencia para escribir en los alumnos valencianoparlantes.

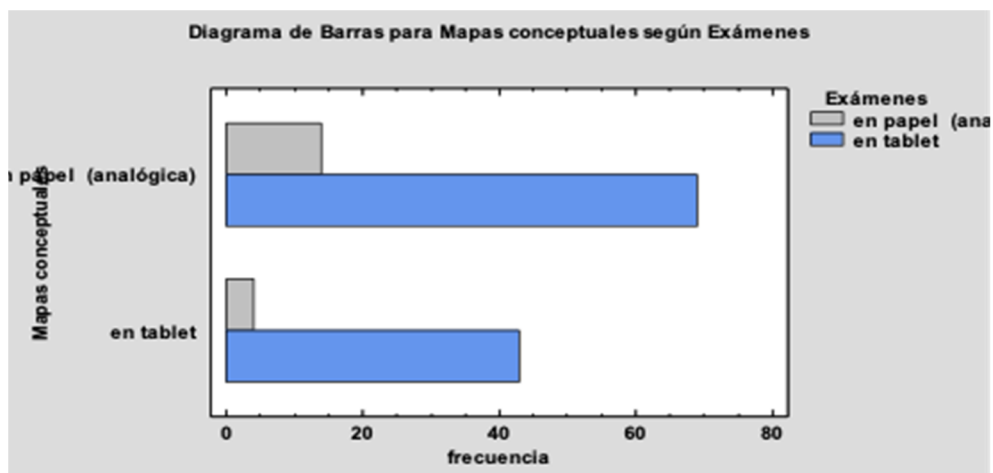
A esta cuestión se sumaron las respuestas sobre las preferencias de la escritura, bien analógica o digital. En la imagen 3 podemos apreciar que el 48,84% del total de los alumnos prefieren escribir a mano y el 51,16% en tableta. De los que prefieren escribir a mano, el 15,50% son valencianoparlantes y 30,23% castellanoparlantes, mientras de los que prefieren escribir en tableta el 11,63% habla valenciano y el 31,01% castellano. Lo que supone que prácticamente está equilibrada y parece no influir la lengua.



*Imagen 4. Cómo prefieren escribir: analógico o digital según la lengua materna del alumno*

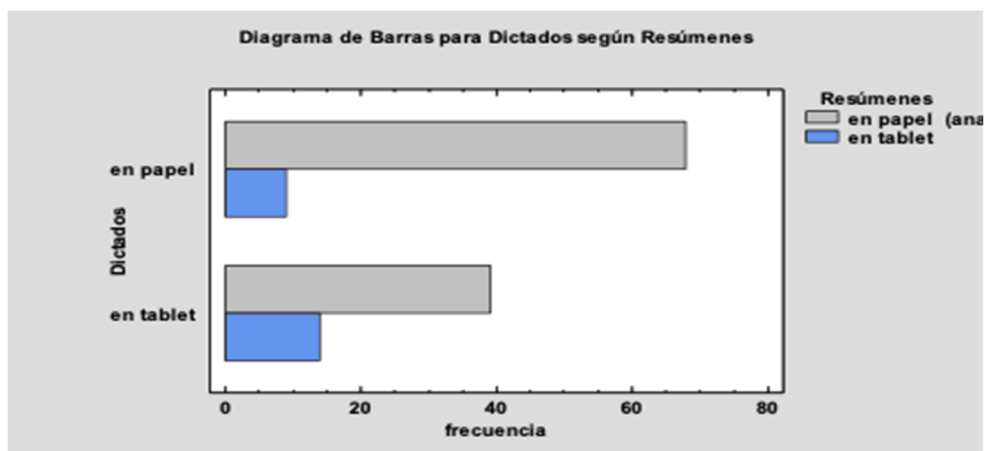
Hemos comentado que se trataba de alumnos que llevaban 3 cursos aprendiendo con la herramienta (tableta), por lo que en el proceso de aprendizaje y realización de tareas queríamos conocer si existía una tendencia analógica o digital en función de las tareas requeridas. Escogimos algunas de las que realizaban con frecuencia en sus clases (mapas conceptuales, resúmenes, dictados y/o exámenes), por tanto, en su proceso de aprendizaje mediaba un instrumento o artefacto como es la tableta y tratamos de mostrar cuál era la tendencia, si digital o analógica según qué tarea. Así que, en las imágenes posteriores interpretamos las frecuencias y comparativas con respecto a cada tarea y su preferencia: digital o analógica.





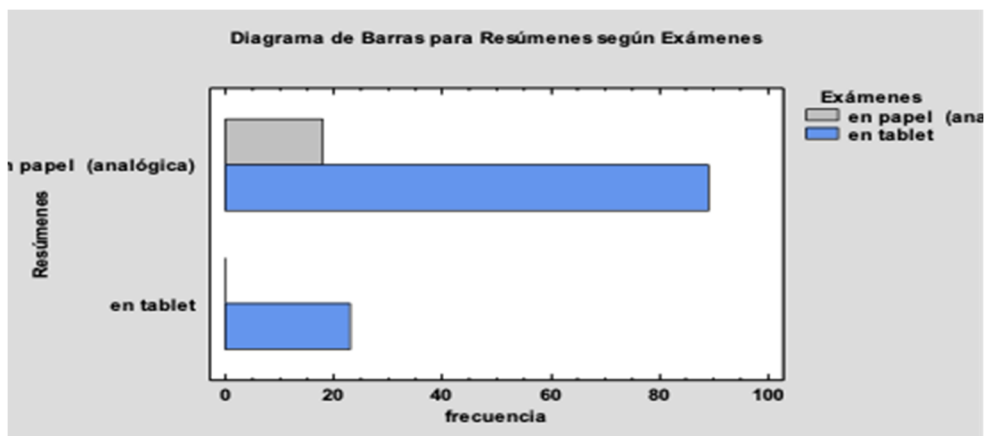
*Imagen 5. Diagrama de frecuencia de mapas conceptuales según exámenes*

Del total de los 130 alumnos, 83 (un 63,85%) tienen como preferencia realizar los mapas conceptuales en papel (analógica) y un 36,15% en tableta. De ese grupo, 63,85% de alumnos, un 53,08% prefiere realizar, sin embargo, los exámenes en tableta y un 10,7% en papel. Por otro lado, de los 47 alumnos (un 36,15%) que decían preferir realizar los mapas conceptuales en tableta, 43 (un 33,08%) quieren hacer los exámenes en tableta y solo 4 (un 3,08%) quieren hacerlos en papel. La opción que llama la atención es que se asemeja el porcentaje de los alumnos que señala que tiene preferencia realizar los mapas conceptuales en tableta (43) con los que prefieren el examen en tableta (43); es decir en los mapas conceptuales y exámenes los alumnos se decantan por realizar las tareas digitales.



*Imagen 6. Diagrama de frecuencia dictados con respecto a los resúmenes*

En esta tarea intentamos comparar la tendencia entre dictados y resúmenes; en la tabla de frecuencias nos indica que, de los 130 alumnos, 77 (un 59,23%) quieren hacer los dictados en papel (analógico) y que de estos 68 (un 52,31%) quieren realizar los resúmenes en papel, mientras que 9 (un 6,9%) prefieren en tableta. Por otro lado, de los 53 (40,72%) alumnos que dijeron que querían hacer los dictados en tableta, 14 (un 10,7%) prefirieron realizar los resúmenes en tableta y 39 (un 30%) decían que su preferencia a la hora de realizar los resúmenes era hacerlos de forma analógica. Por lo que está bastante equilibrada la preferencia.



*Imagen 7. Diagrama de frecuencia resúmenes según exámenes*

Aquí vemos que del total de los alumnos 107 (el 82,31%) dicen que prefieren realizar la tarea de resúmenes en papel y 23 (un 17,69%) lo prefieren en tableta. Del 82,31% de los alumnos que han señalado tener preferencia por hacer los exámenes en tableta 18 (un 13,8%) lo prefieren en papel. De los 23 alumnos (17,89%) que han dicho que prefieren hacer los resúmenes en tableta; el mismo número, es decir, el 17,89% también prefiere realizar los exámenes digitalmente. Por tanto, en las tareas de resúmenes y exámenes existe una clara preferencia por que sea digital.

A modo de resumen:

Lengua materna	Lengua de preferencia	Escritura digital /analógica
Valenciano	Indistintamente hay un equilibrio en la lengua de preferencia	Hay un equilibrio, no se decantan por ninguna especialmente.
Castellano	Escribir en castellano	

Tareas	Escritura digital	analógica
Mapas conceptuales	+	-
Resúmenes	+	-
Dictados	=	=
Exámenes	+	-

## Conclusiones

Esta investigación se ha planteado con la intención de concretar las creencias sobre la escritura digital en un contexto de contacto de lenguas, por un lado, si la lengua podría influir a la hora de establecer las preferencias de los alumnos de Educación Secundaria entre una escritura digital o analógica. Según los datos analizados, la lengua materna no parece influir en el tipo de escritura de preferencia, digital o analógica; sin embargo, queda constancia que los alumnos castellanoparlantes prefieren escribir en castellano, mientras que los valencianoparlantes no manifiestan una preferencia entre castellano y valenciano; a la hora de escribir existe un mayor equilibrio entre las dos lenguas.

En el contexto de investigación en el que nos encontramos, con alumnos que llevan varios años trabajando con una herramienta digital, y por tanto desarrollando habilidades, competencias y estrategias de aprendizaje, hemos podido conocer, partiendo de las diferentes tareas que se ofrecen en el aula, que los alumnos tienen una tendencia a desarrollar tareas que requieren escritura digital.

Para cada una de las tareas de nuestro estudio, se requería un cierto dominio cognitivo; probablemente en un mismo alumno las competencias de alfabetización digital no eran regulares, de ahí que algunos fueran capaces de diferenciar la dificultad y preferencia que suponía para ellos realizar la tarea digitalmente o de manera analógica.

Esto supondría diferenciar esas habilidades y/o competencias de alfabetización multimodal, proporcionar a los estudiantes la posibilidad de seguir con las estrategias que le faciliten la enseñanza – aprendizaje, o bien identificar cuáles son las nuevas competencias que desarrollan con una mejor habilidad y enfocar las tareas en función de las mismas, bien sean digitales o analógicas.

Por lo que se requiere una formación de los docentes en esas competencias de alfabetización multimodal de los estudiantes, como nueva forma de compartir el conocimiento; e incluir si fuera necesario las de adquisición de conocimiento informal. De este modo, poder identificarlas y tratarlas de manera integrada en las demás competencias o destrezas básicas del área o materia. En este caso nos deberíamos detener en establecer las que corresponderían a la habilidad de escribir.

Estamos viendo cómo los adolescentes están aprendiendo a hacer las cosas a través de un alfabetismo multimodal y debemos aprovechar el interés por ellas y desarrollar su aplicación en las escuelas con una intervención y diseño de tareas digitales o analógicas de manera explícita.

El contacto de lenguas no parece ser un impedimento para continuar fomentando la alfabetización multimodal. Incluso podemos apreciar que existe un mayor equilibrio en sus preferencias. No debemos olvidar que la tecnología forma parte de la sociedad y las prácticas educativas deben acercarse no alejarse de la misma.

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# El reto de las clases exclusivamente en línea

ALINA-LUCIA NEMEŞ<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen.** Las aulas o clases virtuales se utilizan desde hace mucho tiempo en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje para una multitud de asignaturas, como, por ejemplo, para las clases de lenguas extranjeras que representan el objeto de nuestro artículo. Pero, hasta el año pasado (2019), representaban un segmento adicional, complementario para las clases tradicionales, mientras que el contexto actual de la pandemia del coronavirus, que ha cambiado profundamente la vida cotidiana de la gente, ha producido grandes cambios en el proceso educativo también, pasando de las clases presenciales a clases exclusivamente en línea. Profesores y alumnos se ven obligados a adaptarse sobre la marcha a la nueva realidad, lo cual es un verdadero reto. Esta nueva situación supone nuevas competencias, como la digital, nuevos escenarios de aprendizaje, para todos los protagonistas. El docente se encuentra de repente frente a la necesidad de reestructurar los contenidos, trasladar los materiales ya utilizados físicamente al aula virtual, incluso crear nuevos materiales didácticos adecuados para el uso electrónico, ingeniar nuevas estrategias didácticas, modificar los objetivos ya trazados en función del cambio surgido, concebir otras maneras de evaluar y de ofrecer el feedback, etc. En breve, en el artículo titulado *El reto de las clases exclusivamente en línea* vamos a analizar los diferentes aspectos relacionados con esta nueva realidad en la didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras.

**Palabras clave:** *novedades, enseñanza, aprendizaje, lenguas, aula virtual, competencias, adaptación.*

## Introducción

Actualmente, la práctica académica se sirve de forma corriente de las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación (TIC). Las aulas o clases virtuales se utilizan desde hace mucho tiempo en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, sobre todo en la educación a distancia, para una multitud de asignaturas, como, por ejemplo, para las clases de lenguas extranjeras que representan el objeto de nuestro artículo. Se habla de E-learning (aprendizaje electrónico), como se denomina la educación virtual a distancia, con encuentros asincrónicos, mediante canales electrónicos, utilizando soportes

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digitales, M-learning o Mobile Learning (aprendizaje móvil) que significa usar dispositivos móviles (teléfonos móviles inteligentes) y aplicaciones en la educación, B-learning o Blended Learning (aprendizaje combinado o mixto) que se refiere al aprendizaje semipresencial o híbrido, combinando la educación presencial con la educación en línea, ELAO (enseñanza de lenguas asistida por ordenador) que facilita el aprendizaje electrónico o la práctica de una lengua a distancia, con sus debidos beneficios: flexibilidad, economía, conocimientos mínimos que permiten utilizar las plataformas, libertad en cuanto al tiempo y al ritmo de aprendizaje, transparencia en cuanto a todo el proceso educativo, interacción y colaboración a distancia facilitadas, posibilidad de ofrecer feedback, etc. (ver también Ko, Rossen, 2017).

Pero, hasta el año pasado (2019), representaban un segmento adicional, complementario para las clases tradicionales, mientras que el contexto actual de la pandemia del coronavirus, que ha cambiado profundamente la vida cotidiana de la gente, ha producido grandes cambios en el proceso educativo también, pasando de las clases presenciales a clases exclusivamente en línea. Profesores y alumnos se ven obligados a adaptarse sobre la marcha a la nueva realidad, lo cual es un verdadero reto. Estamos frente a un nuevo enfoque, un cambio de paradigma, por lo cual surgen muchísimas preguntas, dudas, hasta temores: ¿cómo organizar las clases exclusivamente en línea?, ¿cómo diseñar espacios virtuales?, ¿qué plataformas usar?, ¿cómo organizar y compartir la información, los recursos?, ¿cómo fomentar el trabajo colaborativo?, todo esto sin descartar el aspecto social y actitudinal (difícil de transmitir a distancia) del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, con tal de realizar una tarea educativa de calidad.

Además de la necesidad de usar las herramientas adecuadas, el profesor debe reestructurar los contenidos, revisar la materia, trasladar los materiales ya utilizados físicamente al aula virtual, incluso crear nuevos materiales didácticos adecuados para el uso electrónico, ingeniar nuevas estrategias didácticas, modificar los objetivos ya trazados en función del cambio surgido, concebir otras maneras de evaluar y de ofrecer el feedback, etc., con el fin de ofrecer un servicio educativo cualitativo.

En el presente trabajo titulado *El reto de las clases exclusivamente en línea* vamos a analizar estos aspectos.

## **Capacitación de los docentes en el uso de las TIC**

Uno de los problemas que se plantea es si los profesores están capacitados en el uso de las nuevas tecnologías. El docente se encuentra de repente frente a la necesidad de adaptarse sobre la marcha. Con tal de realizar una tarea educativa de calidad, debe conocer y utilizar equipamientos

digitales, hardware y software adecuado, actualizado (lo que puede generar costes adicionales si se compra la licencia que permite el uso legal de los programas). Se suman también otros requisitos: conocer y usar los recursos en la red, los medios en línea (acceder y usar diferentes plataformas, formatos, crear y almacenar contenidos digitales), comunicar en línea, colaborar, relacionarse con los alumnos, localizar y procesar el contenido, filtrar las informaciones, ordenarlas, para ofrecer contenidos auténticos y fiables en la red, analizar las fuentes necesarias para el trabajo en autonomía y saber cómo gestionar y resolver los eventuales problemas teniendo presente que esta nueva situación supone nuevas competencias, como la digital, nuevos escenarios de aprendizaje, para todos los protagonistas del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje, respectivamente para los profesores y para los estudiantes. De momento, no todos los profesores tienen la formación y las competencias para gestionar el aprendizaje exclusivamente en línea, ya que los cursos de adquisición de habilidades digitales no se encuentran en la formación docente inicial o continua (ver también las conclusiones del estudio de Zempoalteca, Barragán, González, Guzmán, 2017, según las cuales la competencia digital de los docentes está a un nivel bajo).

Según una encuesta dirigida a los profesores de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (2020), destacan las siguientes solicitudes de apoyo: acompañamiento pedagógico, asesoría técnica, disponibilidad de recursos digitales, formación pedagógica, etc. Imaginamos que la mayoría de los profesores del mundo se confrontan con los mismos problemas.

Dada la evolución de la pandemia, se requiere imperiosamente facilitar la adquisición de las habilidades digitales indispensables para el futuro curso escolar/ universitario, para un buen rendimiento académico, sobre todo porque cada institución educativa propone diferentes escenarios, entre los cuales las clases exclusivamente en línea.

## **Propuestas de desarrollo de la enseñanza**

Vista la multitud de amenazas, riesgos, dificultades, el comienzo del nuevo año escolar y académico se encuentra bajo el signo de las dudas. Hay países donde el nuevo curso escolar empieza con clases presenciales, bajo la presión social de los padres, otros donde las clases se desarrollarán con restricciones en cuanto a la asistencia o siguen en línea. Solo vamos a exponer un caso de España y uno de Rumanía.

España es uno de los países donde el gobierno expresa la necesidad de retomar la actividad educativa presencial respetando una serie de medidas de prevención e higiene que garanticen la vuelta a las aulas de forma segura, como mantener la distancia interpersonal, llevar mascarillas, ventilar las



aulas, etc., según el sitio web del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (2020). Pero todo depende de la evolución de la crisis de la Covid-19 y de cada comunidad. En el caso de la capital, Madrid, se propone un sistema semipresencial, o asistencia en días alternos con clases en línea también, o incluso clases telemáticas hasta que se mejore la situación. La Universidad Autónoma de Madrid hace una planificación flexible, que comprende tres situaciones en su *Plan de actuación para el curso 2020/2021 y la adaptación de las actividades formativas a la evolución de la Covid-19* (UAM, 2020):

- normalidad pre-COVID 19, que permite la docencia presencial en el aula sin restricciones,
- restricciones de movilidad y reunión, que permiten la docencia presencial en el aula en reduciendo el tamaño de los grupos,
- suspensión de cualquier actividad presencial en el aula.

Durante el primer semestre

la docencia se desarrollará de forma semipresencial o híbrida, combinando la docencia presencial en el aula en grupos más reducidos, cuando las medidas sanitarias así lo exijan, con las actividades formativas a distancia tanto síncronas (en tiempo real) como asíncronas (en diferido) a través de plataformas electrónicas. (UAM, 2020)

con la posibilidad de modificar la modalidad de desarrollo de la enseñanza.

De igual modo, según el plan de desarrollo del primer semestre del curso académico 2020-2021, publicado en su página web (UBBCLUJ, 2020), la Universidad Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, Rumanía, representando la mayor comunidad académica del país, propone los siguientes escenarios de actuación:

- vuelta a las condiciones pre-Covid-19, con modalidad clásica de desarrollo de la actividad didáctica,
- actividad didáctica exclusivamente en línea, de acuerdo con las disposiciones legales vigentes al nivel de país,
- cursos en línea para todos los niveles, es decir licenciatura y máster, con la recomendación para los profesores de volver a pensar y de reestructurar los cursos de tal forma que promuevan el aprendizaje activo y el aprendizaje por descubrimiento. Al mismo tiempo se proponen seminarios y trabajos de laboratorio en condiciones clásicas para los estudiantes del primer curso (con la meta de darles a conocer la cultura universitaria y para prevenir el abandono escolar) y del último curso (para que puedan hacer el trabajo de fin de estudios), de las facultades de ciencias experimentales y de orientación vocacional. Para los demás, los seminarios se desarrollarán en línea.

Ya que existe la posibilidad de continuar las clases exclusivamente en línea, debemos hacer un balance para establecer los aspectos positivos y los aspectos negativos, las oportunidades y las amenazas, a partir de la experiencia acumulada, en el intento de mejorar la enseñanza a distancia.

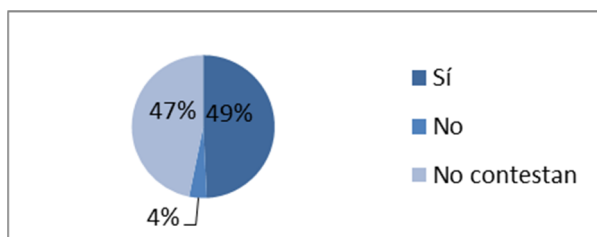
## **Amenazas**

A falta de un marco común de uso de plataformas o de aplicaciones, los docentes se han concentrado en la elección de estas, a la cual se suma el trabajo penoso de aprender a utilizarlas con el objetivo de tener clases interesantes e interactivas en línea, sin olvidar que lo más importante, al igual que en las clases presenciales, es su actitud, su capacidad de animar y de incentivar a los alumnos a estudiar, su contribución al diseño de la clase, la integración del material adecuadamente elegido para la realización de los objetivos preestablecidos.

No es nuevo resolver ejercicios publicados en línea, buscar informaciones para la resolución de unas tareas, consultar un libro de una biblioteca digital, leer informaciones complementarias, contribuir a foros de debate, usar el correo electrónico para comunicarse con el tutor, asesor o profesor, para completar las clases presenciales. Sin embargo, esta nueva situación mundial no ha dejado tiempo para poner en balance las opciones: en presencia o a distancia, sino que se han impuesto las clases exclusivamente en línea, lo que es un verdadero reto para los docentes, para los estudiantes, hasta para los padres.

En el artículo *Le webinaire ou la classe virtuelle dans l'apprentissage des langues* (Nemeș, 2019) presentamos las dificultades, las amenazas y los riesgos que supone la organización de una clase a distancia: la falta de habilidades digitales o de equipamientos técnicos (cuya adquisición puede generar costes adicionales), dificultades en la elección y el uso de las plataformas, la inestabilidad de la conexión a Internet, el problema de la creación de la clase virtual y la organización de su contenido, que pueden resultar muy estresantes debido al tiempo que requieren, la imposibilidad de gestionar un gran número de participantes.

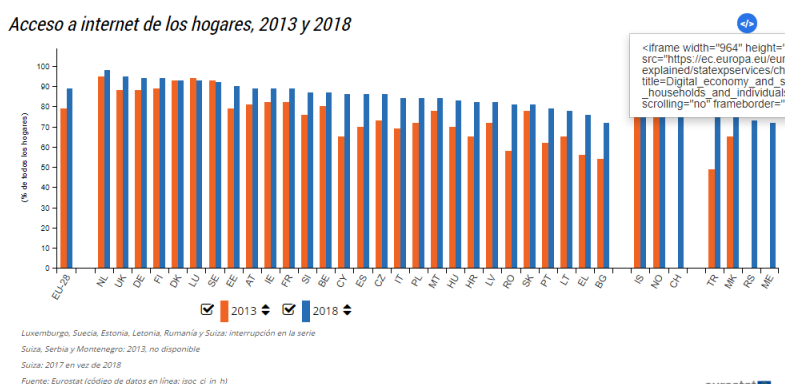
Para profundizar el tema, en el presente trabajo venimos con unas estadísticas propias, dirigidas a los estudiantes de mis cursos. A la pregunta si disponen de una buena conexión a Internet, notamos que el porcentaje de los estudiantes que declaran tener una buena conexión se acerca al porcentaje de los que no contestan, aunque leen la pregunta (según el registro automático de la actividad de los usuarios en la plataforma elegida). Sin embargo, existe también un 4% que no tiene conexión estable.



**Fig. 1.** ¿Disponen los estudiantes de una buena conexión a Internet?

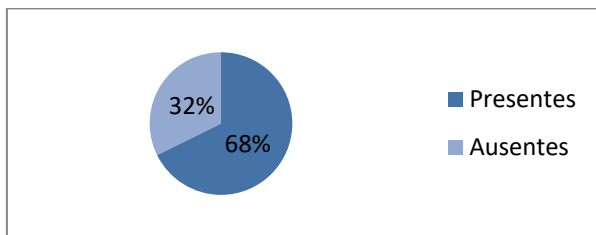
Si comparamos con el resultado obtenido por el Consejo de los estudiantes de la Facultad de Letras de la Universidad Babeș-Bolyai, publicado en su página de Facebook el 24 de abril de 2020 bajo el título de *Análisis de la situación de los estudiantes de los cursos finales de la Facultad de Letras en el contexto de la pandemia de la Covid-19* [n.t.], donde el 59,5% (de un total de 432 respuestas) de los participantes en la encuesta declara tener una buena conexión a Internet, mientras que el 40,5% afirma no tener buena conexión, podemos concluir que los estudiantes que no contestan (en el caso de nuestro sondeo) no disponen de este recurso indispensable para el buen desarrollo de las clases exclusivamente en línea, lo que puede dificultar el proceso educativo.

Para los estudiantes que no tienen conexión a Internet es difícil que el profesor encuentre soluciones. El alumno y/o su familia deben buscar soluciones. Si analizamos las estadísticas de Eurostat (2019), observamos que España y Rumanía gozan de un alto porcentaje en cuanto a los hogares con acceso a Internet:



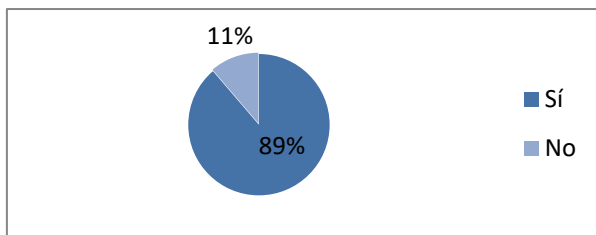
**Fig. 2.** Acceso a Internet de los hogares: 2013 y 2018 (Eurostat, 2019)

Estos datos influyen en la asistencia en línea. En cuanto a la participación de modo síncrono, destacan las siguientes cifras:



**Fig. 3.** *Asistencia en línea de modo síncrono*

Como promedio de la asistencia semanal a las clases, un tercio de los estudiantes no participa en las actividades en línea sincrónicas, lo que hace difícil el mejoramiento de las competencias orales: comprensión oral, expresión oral e interacción oral, especialmente porque hablamos de clases de lengua extranjera. Por otra parte, un mayor número de estudiantes consulta los documentos, los ejercicios (que incluyen las competencias lingüísticas que deben adquirir – comprensión oral, comprensión escrita, expresión escrita –, menos la expresión y la interacción orales), las informaciones publicadas por el profesor en plataformas asíncronas, el 11% frente al 32% de los que no participan en actividades en línea, sincrónicas.



**Fig. 4.** *Participación en actividades en línea asíncronas*

Los resultados indican que la mayoría se ha adaptado a las nuevas condiciones de trabajo, ha buscado y ha encontrado soluciones para seguir estudiando, seguir en contacto con los profesores y con los demás estudiantes, en fin indican el interés de los estudiantes de seguir estudiando a pesar de la nueva situación que se impone.

De ahí concluimos que, en nuestro caso, la combinación de varios medios de comunicación ha sido una buena alternativa para los estudiantes que no disponen de los recursos necesarios para continuar sus estudios en línea o que no pueden conectarse siempre, e incluso para disminuir los riesgos de abandono escolar, aunque un 43,9% (de un total de 293 respuestas) señala como inconveniente el uso de demasiadas plataformas, según el Consejo de los estudiantes de la Facultad de Letras. También la inestabilidad de las plataformas y la incompatibilidad que puede implicar el uso de cierto

buscador/ navegador o programa para abrir un documento o una plataforma exigen el uso de varias opciones, pese a que esto requiere más tiempo.

Si analizamos en nuestra actividad docente la comunicación con el profesor y con el grupo, en plataformas digitales, resaltamos una buena comunicación: desde la publicación de los materiales didácticos (cursos – presentación de un autor, de un volumen, de un libro, de una corriente literaria, interpretación de un texto, listado de conectores para la redacción de textos, explicaciones referentes a los usos de cierto tiempo verbal, de preposiciones, de palabra homónimas, de perífrasis verbales-, enlaces para ejercicios complementarios o pruebas de respuestas múltiples, con corrección automática, o de respuestas abiertas, bibliografía escaneada, enlaces para la lectura en línea o para la descarga gratuita de libros que aparecen como lecturas obligatorias, de bibliotecas digitales de todo el mundo, siempre respetando las cuestiones legales, como derechos de autor, y éticas concerniente el uso de materiales digitales), hasta las conversaciones en el grupo o en privado, conteniendo preguntas y respuestas relacionadas con el contenido del curso (temas, autores, bibliografía), con la manera de desarrollo de la clase (cuestiones administrativas: horario de las clases o de las tutorías, anuncios con los enlaces para acceder a clase – con las explicaciones debidas y tutoriales para facilitar la conexión de los estudiantes – o los códigos de las clases, maneras de registrarse – nombre, apellido, curso – con tal de que el profesor pueda guardar una evidencia clara de la asistencia a clase, fechas para la entrega de las asignaciones, fechas para el examen, consignas, sondeos para conocer la opinión de los estudiantes en cuestiones de examen, contenido, fechas, comunicación de las notas o calificativos, pago de las tasas), con el modo de gestión de las actividades, para aclarar dudas, para confirmar la realización de una tarea, mostrando cada uno paciencia y tolerancia en relación con los demás. Estas conversaciones se desarrollan de modo asíncrono.

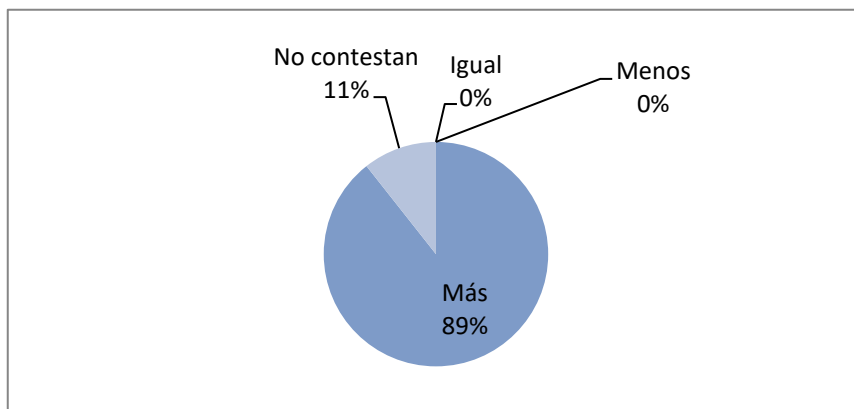
Entre las conversaciones lanzadas en los grupos de una red social, especialmente creados por el profesor para mantener en contacto a todos los estudiantes de un curso, mencionamos:

- temas relacionados con el desarrollo de la evaluación en función de los posibles escenarios (¿Cómo será el examen, presencial o a distancia?, ¿Qué supone la creación de un portafolio digital?, ¿Cuánto tiempo dura la prueba de expresión oral?, ¿Cuál es el plazo para la entrega de la prueba?),
- explicaciones o preguntas vinculadas con el desarrollo del aprendizaje a distancia (¿Cuál es el código de la clase de hoy?, ¿Dónde encuentro los temas para las composiciones?, ¿Qué plataforma o formato

utilizamos para publicar/ compartir el portafolio digital?, ¿Enviamos por correo electrónico el trabajo escrito?),

- cuestiones administrativas (¿Dónde solicitamos el certificado de competencia lingüística?, ¿Cuándo podemos solicitarlo?, ¿Cuándo caduca el certificado?, ¿Qué otras opciones hay para obtener un certificado de competencia lingüística?)

Se trata de publicaciones escritas tanto en rumano, como en español, tratándose de clases de literatura española e hispanoamericana para estudiantes de filología o de lengua para los estudiantes no filólogos de la Universidad Babeș-Bolyai. Algunas son preguntas que anticipan la información del docente, otras que duplican lo dicho/ escrito lo que puede traducirse por el agobio de los estudiantes con informaciones y tareas que se suman si pensamos en el conjunto de asignaturas que tienen durante el semestre. Esto coincide con la conclusión de la encuesta dirigida a los estudiantes que han tenido que contestar a la pregunta: ¿Cómo aprecias el trabajo individual durante la cuarentena frente al trabajo ejercido en condiciones normales, con clases presenciales? La pregunta se refiere a la actividad educativa en general, no particularmente a mis cursos.



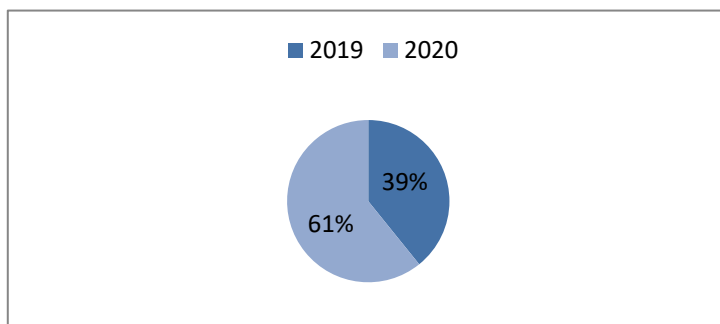
**Fig. 5.** *El trabajo individual en línea frente al trabajo en condiciones normales*

Ninguno de mis estudiantes afirma que trabaja menos o, por lo menos, de igual modo en la enseñanza exclusivamente en línea. El Consejo de los Estudiantes de la Facultad de Letras señala el mismo inconveniente con un porcentaje de 79.8% (de un total de 293 respuestas) que sostiene trabajar más que en el periodo de las clases presenciales.

La misma resolución aparece si preguntamos a los profesores que tienen cursos semanales de forma síncrona o asíncrona: la educación en línea supone más inversión de tiempo, comparada con la educación tradicional.

En breve, la dimensión tiempo representa una desventaja tanto para los profesores como para los alumnos.

Asimismo, la comunicación en los medios sociales requiere mucho tiempo (leer, analizar, contestar). Miremos las cifras proporcionadas por la actividad en concreto en el mes de mayo de 2020, antes de la sesión de exámenes: intervenciones del profesor e intervenciones de los estudiantes, frente a la actividad del mismo mes de 2019, en una red social, Facebook, en un grupo cerrado, dedicado exclusivamente a los estudiantes no filólogos de la Universidad Babeș-Bolyai, matriculados en el curso de español para fines específicos.



*Fig. 6. La comunicación en las redes sociales*

En 2020, se registra un aumento del número de las intervenciones en el caso de las clases exclusivamente en línea, es decir un mayor consumo de tiempo, en comparación con la actividad en la red social que completa las clases presenciales. Pero, las plataformas de comunicación ayudan a aclarar dudas relacionadas con los exámenes, con el desarrollo de las clases, así como problemas que surgen debido a la inestabilidad de las plataformas o la incompatibilidad de los programas informáticos.

## **Aprendizaje**

Si superamos el problema técnico, surge la necesidad de planificar de nuevo el aprendizaje, adaptando los medios, los recursos, los contenidos, las estrategias, la evaluación, la relación a distancia con los estudiantes. Además de la parte preparatoria del curso, de planificación del aprendizaje de tal modo que no agobie a los estudiantes con asignaciones suplementarias, el docente debe proporcionarles herramientas de gestión de tareas, ayudarles a organizar su trabajo, el tiempo, trabajando en autonomía o en colaboración. En este caso, notamos un cambio paradigmático, una importante modificación del rol del profesor que no ofrece un contenido total o completo, sino crea el contexto

apropiado, ofrece las herramientas adecuadas para que cada alumno, a su ritmo y organizando solo su tiempo (ver también Tiffin, Rajasimgham, 1997: “la clase virtual deja que el aprendiz decida lo que quiere estudiar, cuándo y cómo”), adquiera de modo autónomo los conocimientos necesarios, en un proceso activo de aprendizaje por descubrimiento, con tal de alcanzar los objetivos didácticos preestablecidos. No hay que perder de vista las capacidades diferentes de los estudiantes, así que el profesor tiene la responsabilidad de elegir el método adecuado para cada uno, proponer actividades diferenciadas como en las clases presenciales, adaptarlas en función del nivel lingüístico o digital de los aprendices. De ahí resulta la necesidad de hacer un análisis de las necesidades del alumnado antes de diseñar cualquier curso, presencial o telemático.

Además, todo depende también del tipo de materia. Son notables las diferencias entre las asignaturas teóricas y las prácticas, por lo cual es imposible realizar un laboratorio de manera exclusivamente en línea, como en la medicina, por ejemplo.

Una solución que proponemos es el método de las clases invertidas: trasladar los contenidos al espacio virtual, material que los estudiantes deben consultar en autonomía, antes de la clase, mientras que el encuentro sincrónico en línea se centra en la aplicación de la información de modo activo, colaborativo. Los alumnos pueden preguntar, pedir explicaciones referentes a lo más difícil o no entendido, transformando el encuentro en un campo de debate, de interacción, y no de simple acto de transmisión de informaciones. Se pueden hacer presentaciones en línea colaborativas, con la participación y contribución de los estudiantes en tiempo real. Así el proceso de aprendizaje se centra más en el trabajo en autonomía para los alumnos, mientras que el profesor intermedia o guía a los aprendices, con mensajes más breves, más esquemáticos, con insistencia en la parte visual para que los receptores puedan retener la información transmitida. De igual modo, el tiempo de una exposición debe limitarse. Se utilizan presentaciones PPT, gráficos, imágenes, esquemas, breves clasificaciones, recursos que presentan también inconvenientes porque desaparece del esquema de la comunicación frontal el sistema de autorregulación en la transmisión del mensaje, dado que no hay contacto visual directo, siendo imposible observar a todos los participantes en una sesión en línea, sobre todo cuando se comparte la pantalla. En muchos casos los alumnos se ven obligados a apagar las cámaras vídeo para un mejor funcionamiento de la conexión a Internet, perdiéndose el contacto directo entre los participantes. En este contexto apreciamos la importancia de la comunicación no verbal puesto que el análisis del lenguaje corporal (que se transmite por medio de gestos, signos, postura) y de la expresión facial del auditorio ayuda al docente a adaptar su manera de



comunicar, de enseñar el contenido, de usar las estrategias didácticas adecuadas, ya que transmiten las emociones de los receptores. Tomemos unos ejemplos, los gestos pueden indicar interés o desinterés, la mirada bajada o la evitación del contacto visual directo o el silencio (el estudiante prefiere quedarse callado) pueden significar miedo o falta de comprensión o falta de confianza en sus conocimientos y por consiguiente falta de confianza en sí mismo. Los movimientos seguidos, la agitación, los brazos cruzados, la mirada perdida se explican por falta de interés o de concentración, falta de confianza, lo que sugiere al profesor que es necesario que cambie de estrategia para llamar la atención del estudiante: crear una atmósfera más relajada, explicar de otra manera un contenido, implicar al alumno en el aprendizaje. En presencia es más fácil detectar las causas y remediarlas.

Sin embargo, no se debe perder de vista el aspecto social y actitudinal, más complicado de transmitir a distancia.

Asimismo, consideramos que el trabajo en línea es una oportunidad para fortalecer el trabajo interdisciplinario y transdisciplinario, estimulando al alumnado a utilizar la red para investigar, para adquirir nuevos conocimientos, para hacer correlaciones entre varias asignaturas, para desarrollar su pensamiento crítico. Se ha demostrado que el uso de las nuevas tecnologías en el aprendizaje estimula la creatividad y tiene un papel motivador en la actividad de los estudiantes.

## **Evaluación**

En lo que se refiere a la evaluación, esta acarrea más dudas si debe realizarse exclusivamente en línea. Por una parte, la evaluación en línea depende de las condiciones técnicas (siempre debemos tener soluciones técnicas alternativas) y de las habilidades digitales de los profesores y de los estudiantes. Por otra parte, se interponen algunos límites propios del medio virtual, como la distancia social, el control limitado del contexto de la evaluación debido a las limitaciones visuales y auditivas, lo que nos hace pensar en la posibilidad de fraude en los exámenes, de trabajos plagiados, por ejemplo en literatura, y en la limitación de la gestión del grupo de estudiantes. Para evitar algunos inconvenientes se recomienda la introducción de ítems de evaluación variados, ítems con respuestas abiertas, subjetivas, proyectos individuales o de grupo, que se prestan a varios enfoques, a varias soluciones o formas, al uso de diferentes fuentes o recursos, que implican el pensamiento crítico, creativo, reflexivo (como comparaciones, análisis, síntesis, creación), evitándose la reproducción de memoria de los conocimientos adquiridos, asignaciones que permiten la evaluación de competencias transversales, con la indicación previa de los criterios de evaluación.

La evaluación depende mucho del específico de la asignatura: los resultados de la evaluación de la prestación de un estudiante fuera de un laboratorio de medicina, física o química, no son siempre relevantes. Muchas veces se prefieren las pruebas (de elección múltiple) porque pueden tener corrección automática, lo que facilita el trabajo del docente, pero estos descartan la parte práctica, creativa, personal, innovativa, que aparecería en un e-portafolio (portafolio electrónico) que da al estudiante el tiempo necesario para reflexionar y completarlo, para buscar los recursos, las fuentes, las herramientas necesarias para demostrar sus habilidades o su progreso (ver también Conrad, Openo, 2018).

Entre las ventajas de la evaluación en línea (ver también JISC, 2010) mencionamos: la reducción del tiempo (si hablamos de respuestas con corrección automática, por ejemplo), de los costes (al nivel de la institución, del profesor y de los estudiantes), la posibilidad de almacenar los trabajos de los estudiantes que se pueden acceder a cualquier hora y de cualquier lugar, la facilidad de gestionar las respuestas, el tiempo dedicado, la actividad de cada uno, utilizando documentos que se generan automáticamente para el seguimiento del progreso, la posibilidad de grabar los exámenes orales, reduciendo el riesgo de equivoco, la oportunidad de revisar las respuestas y de ofrecer un feedback personalizado. Así pues, la evaluación, aun si se realiza en línea, como parte integrante del proceso de aprendizaje, debe centrarse en el estudiante, visto su papel motivador y regulador (se averigua en qué medida se han alcanzado los objetivos preestablecidos y se logra aplicar los conocimientos adquiridos, para remediar los eventuales fallos en el proceso).

## **Conclusión**

En conclusión, la educación en general se encuentra en un momento de cruce a nivel mundial y es difícil tomar decisiones claras a largo plazo debido a la evolución imprevisible de la situación epidemiológica que condiciona la aplicación de distintas medidas establecidas por las autoridades. Lo que queda absolutamente necesario es ofrecer una educación cualitativa, sea presencial, sea semipresencial o en línea, para que esta crisis provocada por la pandemia de la Covid-19 no deje un vacío inmenso en el trayecto escolar de los alumnos e implícitamente en su desarrollo profesional y personal. A pesar de las amenazas, la presión de digitalizar y de transferir los cursos en línea debe abordarse positivamente, respectivamente tomarse como una oportunidad de modernización de la educación universitaria en un proceso acelerado por la pandemia, movilizandocreatividad e innovación de parte de toda la comunidad académica. Es una tarea complicada, pero no

imposible de gestionar. La clave se encuentra en una buena organización del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje, la implicación de las autoridades con medidas coherentes, que no agobien ni a los profesores, ni a los alumnos, ni a los padres.

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## ***II. Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate***



# Terminological Variation and Communicative Mediation Within the Context of Specialised Discourse – an Ecolinguistic Approach

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**Abstract:** Terminology is a core need and an asset for communicative mediation activities. While communicative mediation may enable access to discourse, text and knowledge in another language, terminology links the language professional (translator, teacher, interpreter) to the specialist's discourse and to the conceptual system of the domain by delivering accurate linguistic and terminological resources, allowing enhanced quality and consistency. Some domains are highly characterised by scientific and technical activities, while others combine broader professional and social groups and are strongly marked by cultural, social, and environmental traits. In both categories, the type of knowledge and its level of specialisation create different linguistic dynamics, leading to different methodological approaches in terminology and language for specific purposes teaching / learning and different strategies in communicative mediation. How can these differences be addressed when building terminological and other language related resources for communicative mediation activities? Aiming to answer this question, we will present a study on language for special purposes dynamics and terminological variation for two case study domains, Mediterranean Diet and Aquaculture, using a totally new theoretical framework in terminology and LSP: the ecolinguistic approach.

**Keywords:** *communicative mediation, terminology, specialised language dynamics, terminological variation, ecolinguistics.*

## Introduction – Communicative mediation and terminology

Information, knowledge, and the human experience are shaped to a large extent by languages and by their diversity. The continuous development of knowledge and fields of activity walks side by side with the need to know and understand all aspects of human experience, to process it as organised

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pieces of information, and to communicate. The outcome is the dissemination of large volumes of information and data, with a significant impact on individuals and social groups. Rejecting the concept of language as a code, Conceição states:

a natural language is not a mere communication code, and the knowledge of its structure and use in a more or less automatic manner guarantees neither mastery during the communicative act nor the possibility of its strategic management<sup>3</sup>. (Conceição, 2018, p. 28)

as it relates to the concept of language in its functions of “conceptualization, thematization and topicalization which also allow it to act as mediator” (Conceição, 2018, p. 28).

The concept of mediation, first developed by Vygotsky (1986), was later extended to other areas of human activity. Currently, mediation processes perform various functions in different human activities. According to Rousseau (2007), linguistic mediation in verbal communication can be defined as:

(...) any communicative activity requiring the transformation or adaptation of a spoken or written message, in such a manner to make it intelligible to a target audience in a given linguistic context communication. (Rousseau, 2007, p. 1)<sup>4</sup>

Thus, verbalisation is deeply embedded in communication processes.

One of the theoretical principles in terminology is that of a dual function: both the representation and/or management of specialised knowledge and its transfer, understood as its communication. Terminology enhances the process of sharing specialised knowledge, making it available to language professionals (translators, interpreters, teachers) and specialists in different areas of activity (Conceição, 2005).

A term, or a terminological unit, shows conceptual utterances conveying meaning when in discourse. Many terminology theories and approaches recognise the terms of a domain as units of knowledge reflecting conceptual structures and allowing communication. Cabré (1993) argues that terminology allows specialists not only to organize their thinking, but also to transfer knowledge and to structure information in specialised texts. Temmerman (2000) confirms the role of language (and languaging) in knowledge development and in the way we understand reality. Thus, one way for understanding how human knowledge is structured and its dynamics is *via* the study of cognitive mechanisms and the way natural languages develop,

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<sup>3</sup> Our translation (original in Portuguese).

<sup>4</sup> Our translation (original in French).

particularly through lexical units in specific fields, i.e., its terminology (Temmerman & Campenhoudt, 2014).

### **Dynamics and terminological variation in specialised discourse**

Terminology is a discipline that studies specialised lexical units, i.e., terminological units, normally in *specialised discourse*. All syntactic and lexical structures, grammatical, lexical, and morphological resources of general languages are present in the so-called specialised languages. Consequently, we accept that terms are found in specialised discourses of a given community of speakers within a given language, and not in a different one. These specialised lexical units are polyhedral units with a cognitive (conceptual), a lexical (linguistic) and a socio-communicative component (Cabr , 2003). In discourse, terms are verbalised and, due to intra- and extralinguistic factors, altered. Both the linguistic component of the term and the respective process of conceptualisation reflect how knowledge is structured. Terminological variation, as different denominations for the same concept, therefore, reflects the dynamics in specialised fields and the changes in human needs, perspectives, communicative aims and cognitive structures and processes.

Terminological work, then, must be able to represent all the specificities of knowledge verbalisation. Its practical purpose fulfils the functions of communicative mediation, making available precise and reliable specialised linguistic resources to various professionals (experts, teachers, translators), language policymakers, and the public. Yet terminological dynamics, expressed by different types of variation, poses a set of challenges to the terminologist, including how to deal with variation itself.

Since the terminological unit is multidimensional, terminological dynamics and variation phenomena should be studied at the conceptual, linguistic, and socio-communicative levels:

Multidimensionality is thus a key aspect in terminology since it highlights a particular dimension of a concept. It underlies terminological variation and can be regarded as a dynamic and situated phenomenon. (Tercedor-S nchez, 2011, p. 184)

The multidimensionality of terms increases in complexity when studying terminological variation. Studies on terminological dynamics should aim for this multidimensional approach and consider several factors that can influence variation. Freixa (2002) defines denominative variation as the existence of different names for the same concept. Aligned with Freixa, Fern ndez-Silva (2017) admits that denominative variation can have



cognitive motivations and consequences, depending on the conceptual traits activated by different variants.

Thus, terminological dynamics in specialised discourse can be analysed through its different forms of variation, the underlying causes, the users involved, and the way terms are represented.

In this work, we will focus on diastatic variation, which has received little attention in terminology studies (Picton & Dury, 2017). Here, we are dealing with different typologies of specialised discourse, stemming from socio-cultural differences among the different participants in the domain. This type of variation has been reduced to the divergences between specialised and non-specialised (i.e., popular) discourse. While studying the relationships between two groups of experts in nuclear medicine (medical doctors and radiology technicians), Picton & Dury (2017) found many situations where different specialists were producing different discourses, and using their own terminology. This form of variation raises questions about term usage by different types of specialists, and socio-cultural communities with very different characteristics.

At this point, we need to define what a “specialist” is and what influence the socio-cultural and/or professional group has on the terminology of the field. We tend to regard people with academic backgrounds, in technical and scientific fields as specialists. Thus, the concept of specialist is not always associated with certain traditional activities. Picton & Dury (2017) consider that a true diastatic dimension includes different types of specialists, with each type using its own terminology. If we admit that a “specialist” is someone who has a deep knowledge of a domain or of a specific activity with or without an academic background, then we will need to apply different and broader criteria and methodologies when retrieving terminological data.

Our two case studies below illustrate this point.

### **Case studies: the Mediterranean Diet and Aquaculture**

Both domains were chosen with the purpose of identifying variation in discourse due to the presence of different participants, recognised as specialists. From previous studies (Machinho, 2018; Noronha, 2018), we know these domains can exhibit various discourse typologies allowing to track diastatic variation. Moreover, these domains are culturally and economically relevant to the region of Algarve (South Portugal) where our study will be held.

The Mediterranean Diet is on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Mediterranean Diet is defined as *a set of skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols, and traditions concerning*

*crops, harvesting, fishing, animal husbandry, conservation, processing, cooking, and particularly the sharing and consumption of food*<sup>5</sup>. The concept is not limited to food and nutrition. It includes socializing during meals and conviviality at mealtimes as a vital element of the local cultural identity, culture, intercultural dialogue, and the practice of physical activity.

The domain was studied by Machinho (2018), who realised the need for a different terminological approach, as she noted the complexity of the domain and the diversity of specialists involved. These domains, with complex structural traits and permeating other fields, were called composite domains (or spheres of activity) (Conceição, 2005; Fréjaville, 2009). Machinho raises questions about the very concept of domain in terminology, but also on the representation of knowledge outside the scope of scientific and technical communities. This type of knowledge spreads and is embedded in communities linked to traditional activities, a cultural dimension, and cannot be isolated from its social dimension. As Machinho states:

(...) a terminology for the Mediterranean Diet that includes popular terminology can allow people to link scientific terminology with the popular terms known by the local communities that use these terms and always have. Although these terminologies are not the result of scientific knowledge per se, they are the result of empirical knowledge that has developed over time, and as such also constitute specialist knowledge. (Machinho, 2018, p. 59)<sup>6</sup>

The author gives the example of herbs and aromatic plants and their common names:

**Scientific name:** Name: *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.

**Family:** Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)

**Common names (pt):** erva-doce; fiôlho; fionho; funcho; funcho-amargo; funcho-bravo; funcho-de-florença; funcho doce; funcho hortense

This example does not specify the context of use for each variant, as it is just a simple survey on the native aromatic plants and herbs from one region of Portugal. However, on its website, the European Medicines Agency<sup>7</sup> chose the name *funcho doce*. The choice of this name aims to establish a standard to reduce communication issues within the Agency, which is perfectly justified. We question, however, whether this is the only name to be included when communicating with other communities of speakers who simply do not know it.

<sup>5</sup> Available in <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mediterranean-diet-00884> [Retrieved on 20/08/2020]

<sup>6</sup> Our translation (original in Portuguese)

<sup>7</sup> Fruto de funcho doce. Resumo do Relatório do HMPC destinado ao público in [https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/herbal-summary/foeniculum-vulgare-miller-subsp-vulgare-var-dulce-miller-thellung-fructus-fennel-fruit-sweet-hmpc\\_pt.pdf](https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/herbal-summary/foeniculum-vulgare-miller-subsp-vulgare-var-dulce-miller-thellung-fructus-fennel-fruit-sweet-hmpc_pt.pdf) [Retrieved on 20/08/2020]

The other domain is Aquaculture, defined as the production and/or rearing of aquatic organisms (animals, algae, plants, or micro-organisms) for food or other purposes (restocking, biotechnology, production of ornamental organisms). The activity can be carried out in fresh and/or salt water, in industrialised systems and structures, and located on land or open waters.

As an important economic area, scientific and technical knowledge is being continuously transferred from universities and research institutes to local producers. The sector, however, remains marked by the existence of many regional and local communities who develop, as a way of life, more traditional forms of aquaculture. These communities have their own terminology associated with the activities they have carried out empirically from generation to generation.

The industry is highly regulated, with a significant volume of legislation at national and EU levels being produced, which needs continuous translation and revision work. In a previous study, Noronha (2018) found that the terminology used at legislative and administrative levels contained a high, sometimes very high, number of uncontrolled denominative variants. The problem detected was common to other languages, as shown in Table 1:

*Table 1. Denominative variation in IATE term base, ID: 1129093.*

PT	EN	FR	RO
estabelecimentos de aquicultura exploração unidade de aquicultura	aquaculture establishment aquaculture farm farm	ferme aquacole ferme d'aquaculture, installation d'aquaculture	fermă de acvacultură unitate de acvacultură,

For the same concept, IATE has three different denominations in Portuguese, English and French and two in Romanian. They are presented as supposed intralingual equivalents and no information is given about their interlingual equivalency. Therefore, these data create difficulties for mediation activities, such as specialized language teaching. These variants do not always match the terminology used by professionals and/or researchers in the field and are forms of diastatic variation. To some extent, this is the result of problems in *corpora* building and data extraction. When added to a terminological resource, these variants lead terminology users to disseminate unappropriated terms. Without further information (or justification) and after repeated uses, they eventually “fossilize”, that is, they may become the norm.

Thus, the differences among discursive types seem to be often underestimated and their role in knowledge communication, domain dynamics and terminological harmonisation are seldom taken into account. It

is worth asking whether, for instance, vocabularies linked to communities and traditional activities have received due attention in terminology studies during the conceptual mapping of the domain, or building of extraction *corpora*, and in the development of terminological resources in LSP (Language for Specific Purposes). As Conceição states:

Therefore, one cannot study the terminology of groups considered culturally hegemonic (the specialists) in a simplistic manner, as terminological harmonisation takes place mainly during the different processes and different levels of social acts and communicative structures. This constitutes, as well, a way to ensure a continuum between common language and the specialised languages (...). (Conceição, 2005, p. 137)<sup>8</sup>

Looking deeper into these domains, one cannot ignore the natural environment, i.e., the ecosystem in which different players operate. When searching for causes of variation and linguistic phenomena at the level of lexical dynamics, it is also necessary to search for natural causes in the biophysical environment and ecology. This implies interdisciplinary work, collaboration with other areas of research, especially where composite domains exist. How should these domains be studied to develop reliable, precise terminologies that keep pace with the specialised discourse dynamics while at the same time respecting the knowledge embedded in these different types of discourse? How can we represent and explain variation caused by intra- and extralinguistic factors that are not always considered relevant, but whose mere existence could be enough to interfere in the communication and transmission of knowledge?

### **Framing terminological variation**

The causes of terminological variation (conceptual, linguistic, extralinguistic) affect both the form (denominative variation) and the meaning of terms (Freixa & Fernández-Silva, 2017), thereby increasing diversity and complexity in discourse. Thus, rather than trying to eliminate variation entirely through normalisation, it may be more fruitful to attempt to understand patterns in linguistic and terminological variation and to what extent (and how) variation can be considered and integrated in a linguistic resource. Making available various denominations of a term to a user, such as a translator, does not necessarily mean compromising the quality of a terminological resource. However, meta-information included in terminological data, e.g., a database or a glossary, should allow the user to

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<sup>8</sup> Our translation (original in French).

choose the preferred form, depending on the target audience and the purpose of the work. Ultimately, harmonisation itself should be a dynamic process, adaptable to the discursive context, and then, Temmerman (2011) claims, even normalisation can be achieved.

Thus, there seems to be a need for a broader theoretical framework for terminological variation. Temmerman and Campenhoudt (2014), addressing issues on culture-bound terminological variation, pinpoint the need to integrate the theoretical perspectives of other disciplines, as well as different methodological approaches. Therefore, assuming terminological variation as a trait in specialised discourses, any explanation of this phenomenon should integrate different insights (cognitive, linguistic, and socio-communicative) and different discourse typologies. What other approach could contribute to this broader vision on variation and its causes, that would permit a better understanding of the dynamics in specialised discourse?

## **Ecolinguistics**

In the 70's, Haugen laid the foundations for a new discipline, *Language Ecology*, in order to study the interactions between languages and their environment, developing his proposal as follows:

The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature, i.e., their social and natural environment. Part of its ecology is therefore psychological: its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another part of its ecology is sociological: its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others. (Haugen, 1972, p. 325)

Other authors (Garner, 2014; Steffensen & Fill, 2014; Kravchenko, 2016), however, see in his approach a reification of language and point out some contradictions. Garner (2014), for instance, states this metaphoric vision of language ecology is not possible because one cannot establish any kind of interaction between a metaphorical and a real entity. This author proposes to adopt ecology as an epistemology, allowing to approach the object of study in terms of holism, dynamism, mutual interaction and context. Steffensen & Fill (2014) propose a naturalised view of linguistics, the *Extended Ecology Approach* (EEH), stating: *the human ecology is extended by integrating value and meaning into ecological structures (including ourselves and each other)*. Thus, they avoid problems related to language reification, while keeping the

notion of language as a system. Human ecology becomes *deeply and irreducibly sense-saturated with meaning*, that is:

(...) our very ecological being in a given socio-ecological environment is meshed with semiotic processes and, as a result, the human ecology is constrained by virtual and historical structures. Rather than treating semiotic processes as adhering to an independent realm, an ecological approach sees language (our sense making potential par excellence) as a species-specific way of regulating real-time metabolic activity, or interactivity (...). (Steffensen & Fill, 2014, p. 18)

For these authors, language is not a tool meant for externalizing cognition, nor even a simple communicative code. It is *a real-time, interbodily coordination that enables us to achieve results that are unreachable for a single human body or person*. Human languages are seen as a form of social coordination allowing us to achieve results and common goals that are otherwise impossible to fulfil individually. This vision seems to reduce humans to the level of other social animals, but Steffensen and Fill, however, add that human ecology *extends by recruiting sociocultural resources, i.e., embodied habits of interaction and artefacts handed down from generation to generation*. Some examples for this claim are culture and writing, the latter seen as a “new technology” allowing cognitive processes through the recruitment of external resources to stabilise (Steffensen & Fill, 2014:18).

This naturalised approach aims to provide a theoretical framework that allows an understanding of socio-cultural aspects (issues related to lexical and grammatical structures, and discursive and communicative issues) and the way these resources are embedded in the interaction between humans and their environment, i.e., in their extended ecology (Steffensen & Fill, 2014, p.19). From this perspective, language cannot be seen merely as a strictly social or cognitive phenomenon, but simultaneously as a cognitive, social and natural phenomenon (Couto & Couto, 2016). Kravchenko, modifying the definition of ecolinguistics proposed by Steffensen and Fill (2014), states that:

Ecolinguistics is (1) the study of (language understood as) the processes and activities through which human beings – at individual, group, population and species levels – exploit their environment in order to create an extended, sense-saturated ecology that supports their existential trajectories, as well as (2) the study of the organismic, societal and ecosystemic limits of such processes and activities, i.e. the carrying capacities for upholding a sound and healthy existence for both human and non-human life on all levels. (Kravchenko, 2016, p. 111)

This definition allows the keeping of language as a system, but as something deeply entwined in biology and seen as an impact agent in the ecosystem through the way we use it in discourse. It also permits us to see how, through discourse, we impact our ecosystemic existence.

## **An ecolinguistic approach to terminology?**

Since this paper is about specialised discourses, what contribution can ecolinguistics make to the study of terminological dynamics and variation? How can this contribution be applied to the development of terminological resources for language mediation activities such as translation, LSP teaching and language and communication policies?

Given the multidimensionality of terms, we cannot fully understand terminological dynamics by separating these dimensions or ignoring any one of them. One could venture to say that approaching terms from an ecological perspective would not only allow for the linguistic, cognitive, and socio-communicative perspectives to be considered, but would also add a new perspective, the ecological, or biophysical, perspective. This new approach to terms can include the way participants interact with their environment and, especially, how participants and consequently discourses are affected by the environment. Terminological variation would provide real evidence of these phenomena. As Fernández-Silva (2010) stated, if we admit a cognitive motivation for variation, denominative variation can be justified by:

- a) variability of categorisation and conceptual structures.
- b) diversity of motivations and its contextual characteristics.
- c) the complexity of the concept-term relationship, i.e., epistemological issues as the separation between the cognitive and linguistic levels, the consideration of the term as a linguistic sign, and, as a consequence of the foregoing, the concept, and the meaning as elements of a distinct nature.

Thus, the way human beings perceive reality reflects processes that change according to culture, language, social groups, and situations, i.e., depending on the context. While placing strong emphasis on the ecosystem, i.e., the natural environment in which discourses are produced, ecolinguistics adds a new variable by bringing biophysical factors into the equation. By using ecolinguistics not as a paradigm, but as a platform to observe linguistic phenomena (Couto, 2014:127), some of these issues can be now observed from a single unified point of view, since it assumes language, cognition, culture and nature as part of a whole. In other words, we can study any phenomenon occurring at the level of specialised discourse without losing sight of the social, cultural, and natural (or biophysical) causes and motivations, as added by ecolinguistics.

From our perspective, this approach can contribute something new towards dealing with some of the paradoxes and issues encountered in

terminology, in the way we look at specialised discourse dynamics, namely variation and associated diastatic and diachronic phenomena. For instance:

- a) It reinforces the role of denomination.
- b) Factors behind dynamics and variation are fully integrated becoming part of the process of evolution of the extended human ecosystem.
- c) Variation is now described as part of the ecosystem of specialised discourse, and normalization as a means, and not an end, to be used for the specific purpose of disambiguating communication.

### Proposed methodology

This approach, however, requires a methodology. As Couto & Couto (2016) argue, ecolinguistics methodology is *the one required by the research object*. Later, they liken the holistic view of ecolinguistics to someone who, when studying a specific detail of their property, climbs up to the roof to have a panoramic view of it, and then descends to their starting point. They also emphasise the need for ecolinguistics to adopt an inter- and multidisciplinary approach and involve other areas of knowledge.

Applying this perspective to terminology, we can frame and accept all methodologies currently used in terminology because everything depends now on the goal of our work. Moreover, discussion of the exclusively onomasiologic or semasiologic approaches no longer applies. This could be an important aspect in relation to (diachronic and/or synchronic) variation studies, or comparable *corpora* research, which can be approached by combined methodologies.

While reviewing the methodological proposals for *Ecolexicology* and *Ecolexicography*, Albuquerque (2019) suggests some changes to implement in lexicographical entries in resources such as dictionaries, keeping in mind

the effects and results that each lexeme brings to individuals (species interacting within the ecosystem) and the planet (the ecosystem), while adding definitions and references more in line with the ecological view of the world, without losing view of the use of language. (Albuquerque, 2019:2077)<sup>9</sup>

He also proposes a classification system of *ecological* and *non-ecological* words, according to a scale of values, with some degree of subjectivity, in our opinion.

However, despite sharing some common ground with lexicology, terminology differs in many other aspects, particularly regarding the fact that

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<sup>9</sup> Our translation (original in Portuguese).



lexical units become terms, due to their cognitive dimension as elements of the conceptual system and knowledge structure of a domain. A terminological resource aiming to register, for example, diastatic variation phenomena, cannot rely merely on changes to terminological records, since terminology deals with units interconnected by a conceptual system. Nevertheless, the purpose of terminology is to collect, organize and structure (and preserve) knowledge.

A methodological principle of ecolinguistics which could be adopted in terminology emerges through the work of Nash and Mühlhäusler (Nash, 2011; Nash & Mühlhäusler, 2014). These authors demonstrate, through fieldwork, how to collect data from populations on the islands of Pitcairn and Norfolk (Australia), how the social and natural environment influence language use and lexical and terminological choices. The authors base their working methods on two aspects: *ecolinguistic field work* and *empirical minimalism*.

In the first case, they seek a close relationship with local communities, even becoming involved in their daily lives. The establishment of a trust relationship allows for a better understanding of these communities and the knowledge of the socio-cultural and biophysical factors relevant to the study to be carried out. They consider this as an essential step to obtain linguistic data, which would otherwise be difficult, or even impossible to obtain. All collected data are then compiled as *corpora* and treated according to common procedures to *corpus* linguistics (Nash, 2011).

Applied to terminology, we can make an analogy with the work the terminologist must carry out with experts in the field of research, thus allowing for a better understanding of the conceptual system of the domain. As we have seen before, these experts may present different typologies and develop their activity in different and diverse ecosystems, as is the case with the domains of Aquaculture and Mediterranean Diet.

The second methodological point discussed by Nash and Mühlhäusler, is *empirical minimalism*. They mention the need for researchers to exercise good judgement in the general application of methods, procedures, and conclusions to different contexts, as the authors consider each linguistic context as unique and that each one should be treated as a distinctive and singular case study. While adapting this principle to terminology, it reinforces the notion that each discursive context must also be treated as unique and any approach to a domain should consider its whole context and the specificities of its participants.

For communicative mediation activities such as translation, knowing the domain's terminology is key to correctly conveying the message of the source text. No less important is knowing how to tailor a translation for the target audience. In this regard, translators, or interpreters, must have information available in the form of language resources to help them in adapting phraseology and/or terminology and to correctly convey the message to the intended receivers of that message. This requires a good knowledge of the discourse specificities and, especially, an awareness of the fact that the main terminological data bases mostly contain discursive types that may not be the appropriate ones to satisfy the translator's objectives. Thus, while trying to match the ecolinguistics approach to terminology work, this project aims to study issues related to diastratic variation and the way it affects variation and terminological dynamics of the chosen domains.

The outcome we hope for is to develop a domain terminology that identifies and expresses diastratic variation in different discursive types. The ecolinguistic approach will be present when characterising the domain and all the participants involved, as well as during terminological data collection. The methodological principles, adapted from Nash and Mühlhäusler, will pay particular attention to the characterisation of the different groups of specialists, while ensuring their close collaboration during the conceptual mapping of the field and during data collection for extraction *corpora*. Collaboration with the local development associations, as cultural mediators, will be essential during this phase. Then, methodology will follow the principles of standardised terminographic work:

- 1) Identification of participants and discourse types
  - a. Characterisation of relevant socio-cultural groups on Mediterranean Diet and Aquaculture.
  - b. Characterisation of the biophysical environment where our domains develop.
- 2) Proximity collaborative interdisciplinary work with the various identified specialists.
  - a. Establishment of a collaborative network between the different groups of specialists.
  - b. Conceptual mapping of domains.
- 3) Preparation and processing of extraction *corpora*; organisation of *corpora* for each domain in *subcorpora* according to the following criteria:
  - a. Diachronic criteria – classification and organisation of texts over a ten-year period.

- b. Diastratic criteria – classification and organisation of texts according to their typology and socio-cultural context of participants – adapted methodology from Tercedor-Sánchez & López-Rodríguez (2012).

*Corpora* building and organisation according to various typologies will help determine whether the variants match the established denominations within different communities. For each term, information about the discursive typology in which the data were obtained will be included. Moreover, information must be added about the environmental context of the participant's communities and, if applicable, about the biophysical environment.

### **Final considerations**

Terminology is fundamental in communicative mediation activities. While communicative mediation provides access to discourses, texts, and knowledge in the same or in another language, terminology provides language resources allowing language professionals (translators, interpreters, teachers of languages for special purposes) to connect with the specialist discourse and the conceptual system of the domain concerned.

Some domains are strongly marked by technical and scientific activities. Others, however, include broader professional and social groups and are strongly marked by cultural, social, and environmental aspects. These professional groups, often, have their own discourse typology, generating different dynamics at terminological and linguistic levels. This led us to rethink methodological approaches in terminology with the aim of better understanding terminological variation, in this case diastratic variation, and how it is affected by specialised discourse dynamics. Bearing this in mind, an ecolinguistic approach will be used to frame terminological variation, since in highly interlinguistic and intercultural contexts, knowledge of the different expressions of a term is the key to better communication.

This is an ongoing project to be developed during a doctoral thesis. It aims to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of specialised discourse, while preserving the knowledge and the know-how of specific communities in a society that wants to be sustainable. By mirroring the unambiguous relationship between contexts, mediation of knowledge through their verbalisation at different levels or language registers, or in different language varieties and/or languages, as the case may be, the results of this research aim to enhance mediation in professional uses of specialised languages and to contribute to preserving and respecting cultural and linguistic diversity.

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# Identifying and Applying Specific Transversal Competences in the Legal Translation Field. An Interdisciplinary Approach

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**Abstract.** Legal translation requires theoretical knowledge and practical competences. Translating legal documents involves terminological precision and “technical” fidelity. Translators should be not only the possessors of specific legal terminology and language, but also the possessors of pragmatic and cultural knowledge. They must be proficient in the target language writing formats and well informed about the source and target legal systems. The legal translator should develop and constantly use specific competences in order to achieve more and more theoretical and practical experience in the legal translation field. This study explores the identification and the application of specific transversal competences in the legal translation field through an interdisciplinary approach. What sort of competences do we choose and how can those competences be implemented? How can we identify which of those competences could be more effective and how could they be embedded in a teaching/learning programme? Starting from these investigative questions and emphasizing applied thematic research, this study focuses on emphasizing the main competences and the main challenges resulting from the identification and the implementation of those competences. Moreover, through this study the author tries to establish the mechanisms of extending a legal or a linguistic approach into an interdisciplinary approach.

**Keywords:** *legal translation, pragmatic and cultural knowledge, specific competences, interdisciplinary approach, teaching/learning programme.*

## Preliminaries

It is generally agreed that legal translation is inspired by and also inspires other types of translation, due to the transfer of common and specific characteristics. In this context, Deborah Cao emphasizes in *Translating Law* that “a competent legal translator is first of all a competent translator” and also that “translation competence refers to the knowledge that is essential to the translation act” (Cao, 2007, p. 39). Based on these statements, we can

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affirm that a competent legal translator should possess not only a good knowledge, but it is highly important to transfer this knowledge in the practice field (translation act) in order to implement it and develop it into a specific translation competence.

In the light of the abovementioned ideas, it is worth mentioning Mona Baker's *indirect definition* of translation competence in the paper *In Other Words (A course book on translation)*, who says that the translators:

Like doctors and engineers, they have to prove to themselves as well as others that they are in control of what they do; that they do not just translate well because they have a 'flair' for translation, but rather because, like other professionals, they have made a conscious effort to understand various aspects of their work. (Baker, 1992, p. 4)

From this point of view, we can extract the most important idea: those *various aspects of a translator work* are the *competences* that the translator identifies before the translation process, implements during the translation act and develops permanently after finishing the translation process in order to be in a continuous control of his work.

Being in a specialized context, the legal translation field, our attention is focused on the translation competence, but generating the idea that a competence can be seen as a contextual skill, more exactly a transfer of contextual skills from the knowledge field to the practice and vice versa, this mutuality allows the integration of the translation competence in the spectrum of transversal competences, under the possibility of the transferable characteristics from translation field to the legal translation field, from academic medium to the professional one, from a formal context to a non-formal one, from discipline to practice.

Starting from these preliminaries, this paper is concerned with the concept of translation competence from the perspective of legal translation field and its specific characteristics in order to emphasize the transfer of various aspects from theory to practice and the extension from a legal and linguistic specificity to an interdisciplinary approach due to the conversion of the translation competence in a transversal one.

### **Specific competences in the legal translation field. Comparative analysis**

What sort of competences do we choose for the legal translation field and how those competences can be implemented in a legal translation act? As it has been mentioned, between the translation field and legal translation field there is a reciprocal relation that can be extended to the competences needed by a legal translator. These competences are presented under the spectrum of

the translation competence which is divided in smaller specific competences that can be analysed from the perspective of transversal competences.

The translation competence is explained by many scholars and institutions, the frameworks proposed by EMT expert group<sup>2</sup> are representative in this context. A first framework was proposed in 2009 and another in 2017. Analysing the first framework, *Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication*, there are two points to raise: the definition of the *competence* and the classification established. From the point of view of the authors of this first framework, the term competence means “the combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and knowhow necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions” (EMT expert group, 2009, p. 3). The last part of the definition, *a given task under given conditions*, shows the same mutuality that we emphasized before, the common characteristics of a translation act can be converted into specific characteristics (*given conditions*) of a legal translation act (*given task*). Moreover, this has highlighted the transfer between competences, the translation competence being extended to a transversal one, this affirmation being based on a specific term used in the same framework to define the specificity of these competences, *interdependent*.

In order to offer a comparative perspective, analysing the information provided in the second framework, *Competence Framework 2017*, it is important to mention a new addition to the former framework: the definition of *competence* is made in accordance with the *European Qualifications Framework* (2008) and it is accompanied by two other definitions of *skill*, *knowledge and learning outcomes*. Regarding the definition of the term *competence*, it is exposed as “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development” (EMT Board, 2017, p. 3). As we can see, the term *combination* is replaced by the term *proven ability*; the term *knowledge*<sup>3</sup> is kept on both definitions; the terms *behaviour* and *knowhow* are

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<sup>2</sup> “The EMT expert group was set up by the DGT in April 2007. Its main task was to make specific proposals with a view to implementing a European reference framework for a Master's in translation (European Master's in Translation – EMT) throughout the European Union. The group was dissolved when the newly created EMT network elected the first EMT Board in 2009.” (EMT expert group (2009). *Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication*. Retrieved September 16, 2020, from: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt\\_competences\\_translators\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> In the new competence framework, the term *knowledge* is also defined as a singular concept: “the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study.” (EMT, 2017, p. 3)



replaced by *skills*<sup>4</sup> and *personal, social and methodological abilities*; and the *given task* and *given conditions* are replaced by *work or study situations* and *professional and personal development*. As a first conclusion, the second definition is presented in an extremely clear way, so that we cannot confuse the concepts proposed as components of the term competence, being a very helpful tool to demonstrate in an obvious way this transfer from translation competence (*knowledge*) to transversal competence (*skills and personal, social or methodological abilities*) and from a translation act (*work or study situations*) to a legal translation act (*professional development*).

The second point to raise is about the classification of translation competence. In the 2009 framework, the EMT expert group presents 6 smaller competences which form the translation competence: the translation service provision competence, the language competence, the intercultural competence, the information mining competence, the thematic competence and the technological competence. As presented by the EMT expert group (2009), the *translation service provision competence* includes two main dimensions, the *interpersonal* and the *production ones* (p. 4-5). Regarding the first dimension, *interpersonal*, it can be implemented by activating the *social role* of the translator (mentioned from the beginning, in the definition of the competence offered in the second framework elaborated by EMT); by establishing the *market requirements and job profiles*; by knowing and using the *negotiation standards* with the client; by going through with the *requirements, objectives and purposes of the client* and/ or the *planning and the management* of translator's personal 'requirements' (time, budget, training etc.); by establishing the *value of the services offered*; by knowing the *standards applicable to a translation service* and the *professional ethics*; by possessing the capabilities of cooperation and collaboration (working in a team). The other dimension, the *production one*, makes reference to the capacity to render in a very appropriate manner the client's request; to establish very clearly the stages and strategies for the translation act; to define and evaluate translation problems and find appropriate solutions; to justify translation choices and decisions; to know how to manage the proofreading and revision of a translation; to establish and monitor quality standards.

The second competence exposed by the EMT expert group (2009), the *language competence*, is presented from the perspective of theoretical

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<sup>4</sup> The definition offered for this term, *skill*, in accordance with European Qualifications Framework (2008), includes the term *knowhow* from the definition of competence offered firstly in the 2009 framework and replaced in the current framework by the term *skill* which: "means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems." (EMT, 2017, p. 3)

knowledge and its implementation through *grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures*, as well as *different conventions of source and target languages* (p.5). The third one listed by the EMT expert group (2009), *the intercultural competence*, is viewed from dual perspective, sociolinguistic and textual (p.6). The SOCIOLINGUISTIC dimension, which is implemented due to the ability to differentiate *the function and the meaning in language variations*; the identification of *the rules for interaction relating to a specific community* and the usage of a *specific register for a particular situation or document*. The TEXTUAL dimension, carrying through the analysis of *the macrostructure, the presuppositions, the stereotypes and intertextual nature of a document*; the description of *the problems* and the definition of *the strategies* for solving those problems; the identification of *the elements, values and references proper to the source and target cultures*; the realisation of the document *in accordance with the conventions and the standards* imposed.

These three competences are accompanied by the *information mining competence* which is developed through a *specific documentary, terminological and phraseological research*, and *specific tools and search engines*<sup>5</sup> (EMT expert group, 2009, p. 6). In addition to the competences already mentioned, the EMT expert group (2009) presents a thematic competence and a technological one (p. 7). The *thematic competence* incorporates the idea of developing thematic knowledge (concepts, language, terminology, presentation) in specialist fields and applications (it is presented the idea of *learning to learn*), while the *technological competence* embraces the usage of software, databases, CAT tools, technical media (it is exposed the idea of *mastering the tools*).

All the above mentioned competences that form the translation competence imperative before, during and after a translation act and that can be transferred to a legal translation act as a transversal competence, are assumed, in a more complex format, in the framework presented by EMT Board in 2017. There are presented five main areas of competence: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, service provision. The first area, *language and culture*, includes *transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness and communicative skills* and is an adjusted form of the second and third competences of the previous framework because are taken into account in order to be implemented *language-specific, linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills* (EMT Board, 2017, p.6). The second area, *translation*, involves a *strategic, methodological*

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<sup>5</sup> We can include in this category *terminology software, electronic corpora and dictionaries*.

*and thematic competence*, that gives us the possibility to observe a connection with the translation service provision competence from the 2009 framework (EMT Board, 2017, p.7). A very important element exposed in this translation area is the focus on students learning process (*students know how...*) in order to can move from the discipline area toward the practice field (EMT Board, 2017, p.8). The third area, *technology*, includes the technological competence (classified as a 6<sup>th</sup> competence in the first framework), exploring the idea of mastering tools and applications through the knowledge of machine translation technologies and the ability to implement them (EMT Board, 2017, p.9). The fourth area, *personal and interpersonal*, covers a special category of competences, in reference to the level of adaptability and employability of the (future) translator. This 'soft skill' enables the transfer mentioned, from a common translation competence to a transversal one, because the (future) translator works in *multicultural and multilingual environments*, uses *current communication technologies and social media*, has *specific professional purposes for evaluating, updating and developing his/her competences through particular strategies and learning methods* (EMT Board, 2017, p.10). The last area, *service provision*, comprises all the competences related to *the implementation of translation and to language services in a professional context* (for example *client awareness and negotiation, project management, quality assurance*) (EMT Board, 2017, p.11). As can be seen, the new competence framework proposed by EMT Board (2017) highlights an extremely important concept: the *reciprocal relation* between all the competences exposed, something new besides the elements presented in the previous format, which allows the migration of characteristics from one competence to another and the interference of common and specific aspects in order to render a complete and complex message: the legal translation process supposes a legal and a linguistic approach via an interdisciplinary approach.

## **Effectiveness in a teaching/ learning programme.**

### **Formal vs. non-formal context**

*How can we identify which of these competences could be more effective in a legal translation context?*

Based on the idea of developing an interdisciplinary approach, the effectiveness of the abovementioned competences can be demonstrated by implementing methods of identification and analysis of relevant aspects, as linguistic aspect through a textual dimension, and a legal one, through a sociolinguistic dimension. For example, choosing specific text typologies for

the legal translation field is based on the *language competence*, in connection with transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness but also with the development and the implementation of language-specific, linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills). The reason would be that all these different text type require, as Katharina Reiss specified in *Text types, translation types and translation assessment*, different transfer methods (Reiss, 1989), and communicative skills, because, in accordance with Basil Hatim point of view in *The translator as communicator* defining the specificity of text typologies/ text-types/ text represents “the way the structure and texture of texts are made to respond to their context” and “a set of mutually relevant communicative functions, structured and textured in such a way as to achieve an overall rhetorical purposes” (Hatim, 1997). This selection of specific text typologies also generates the *intercultural competence* (in connection with strategic, methodological and thematic competence expressed in the *Competence Framework 2017* presented by EMT Board).

Continuing this idea, a pure legal dimension offered to a legal translation act, generates other competences in connection with a specific classification of legal texts in accordance with a particular presentation under the shape of four main categories: EU law, International law, Romanian law and English law. For example, we can replicate in this particular context *the personal and interpersonal area* exposed by the EMT Board in *Competence Framework 2017* because this special classification implies a high level of adaptability and employability of the translator (EMT Board, 2017, p. 10). Or more specifically, he or she performs in multicultural and multilingual environments, uses different and modern communication technologies, develops his/her competences through particular strategies and learning methods. Moreover, we can emphasize in the same context, the *translation service provision competence*, from both 2009 and 2017 competence framework, the legal translator being continually concerned about the implementation of specific translation and language services in his/ her professional context.

*How could these competences be embedded in a teaching/learning programme?*

In the light of the theoretical aspects presented in the former paragraphs, all these competences can be integrated in a teaching or learning programme, due to the mutuality and reciprocity between them that allow the establishment of an ongoing learning in formal, non-formal or informal ways. Within this framework, I will reveal below some passages from a (formal) learning programme and a (non-formal) teaching programme in order to

emphasize, in practice, these translation competences which can be extended to transversal competences.

The first example is extracted from a (formal) learning programme, more specifically from a translation project developed during an entire semester by the European Master in Translation Studies and Terminology from the Faculty of Letters/ BBU<sup>6</sup>. The translation project was based on an inventory of specific texts and, for the next presentation of the competences identified, developed and implemented, I will extract some relevant intratextual and extratextual elements from the source text *Metode și tehnici de prevenire a delincvenței juvenile*<sup>7</sup> (Foca, Gulei, Serea, 2006), which I found relevant for the International law category, more exactly International Human Rights Law with applicability in Romanian law (Civil law, Criminal law and Family law).

As mentioned in the first part of the article, a legal translator needs to possess a translation service provision competence, by going through an interpersonal and production dimension and by establishing the market and the client requirements, the standards applicable to a translation service, the appropriate manner for the client's request; the stages and strategies for the translation act; the translation problems and the appropriate solutions. Having identified all these theoretical characteristics which conduct to the translation service provision competence, their implementation is visible through the creation of two fundamental elements, the Translation Brief (indications and instructions that a client is supposed to send to the translator at the beginning of every translation project) and TOSTA (Translation-Orientated Source Text Analysis<sup>8</sup>, with an objective analysis of the extratextual and intratextual elements), more exactly two models<sup>9</sup> of textual analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> The translation project was developed from 28 March to 15 June 2016 by a group of three students (the author of the present paper, Andreea-Maria Sărmașiu, was one of them) from the European Master in Translation Studies and Terminology from the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University, and analysed legal/ forensic psychology and juvenile delinquency from multiple perspectives: possible clients and possible requirements, terminology and translation problems and strategies, competences developed and implemented and in multiple ways (sets of indications/rules, inventory of specific texts, translation act, analyses and classifications of specific problems and solutions, classification of specific competences etc.)

<sup>7</sup> The text is part of the inventory of 8 specific texts used and analysed only for learning purposes during the translation project from 28 March to 15 June 2016 (Retrieved, September 16, 2020: [https://www.academia.edu/9392351/Metode\\_%C5%9Fi\\_tehnici\\_de\\_prevenire\\_a\\_delincven%C5%A3ei\\_juvenile](https://www.academia.edu/9392351/Metode_%C5%9Fi_tehnici_de_prevenire_a_delincven%C5%A3ei_juvenile))

<sup>8</sup> This term is used and explained by the famous theoretician Christiane Nord in *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (1991)

<sup>9</sup> The two models, translated into English by the author of the paper, were originally presented in Romanian because the source text was in Romanian and it was supposed that the client's first requirement was the translation into English (the target text) for specific purposes.

**Table 1.** Translation Brief<sup>10</sup>

<p><i>The paper <b>Metode și tehnici de prevenire a delincvenței juvenile (2006)</b>, which represents the object of the translation from Romanian into English, is part of the forensic psychology field, the main topic being the juvenile delinquency. It is an appealing text, presented in the form of a psycho-pedagogical material that includes a model of preventing and combating juvenile delinquency, structured on various types of experiential learning activities (worksheets, games).</i></p> <p><i>The translation provided, according to the source text format, and emphasizing the most accurate rendering of the information presented in the worksheets, will be used to develop effective communication, throughout the process, with the international partners of the association.</i></p> <p><b>Client:</b> AS ASSOCIATION</p>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>E-mail:</b>	
<b>Languages:</b> Romanian into English	
<b>FIELD/TOPIC</b>	Forensic Psychology / Juvenile Delinquency
<b>PUBLIC</b>	Psychologists, social workers, psychopedagogues
<b>FUNCTION OF THE TARGET TEXT</b>	The target text will be used in the project to develop effective communication, throughout the process, with the international partners of the association. Also, the target text will serve the Romanian trainers in exposing the ideas, methods and techniques conceived and promoted by them to other foreign trainers, partners within the project or new possible partners interested in this field of activity and the topic exposed. Moreover, the translation of the material will serve to promote the activity of the association in the virtual environment, being accessible internationally to all categories of the public who, coincidentally or not, will discover this research topic.
<b>PUBLIC</b>	Initially, the target text will be addressed to the members of the international organization (psychologists, social workers, psychopedagogues), and later the addressing perimeter will be extended to other international associations or organizations that are interested in such a project. Also, following the possibility of virtual access, the material will be addressed to a large audience, whether he/she is a promoter or not of the exposed social campaign.
<b>DEADLINE</b>	End of May (2016)
<b>PLACE</b>	AS ASSOCIATION, Romania

<sup>10</sup> This example represents only a model of a possible Translation Brief (TB) for an interdisciplinary translation act (legal field-psychology-education), the specific elements (the first column) being part of a theoretical framework, while the information provided (the second column) being indicated by the author of the present paper (as a student participant to the translation project in 2016).

**Table 2. TOSTA<sup>11</sup>**

<b>EXTRATEXTUAL ELEMENTS</b>	
<b>AUTHOR(S)</b>	Foca, L., Gulei, A., Serea, A. (2006)
<b>AUTHOR'S INTENTION</b>	Awareness regarding the prevention and fight against juvenile delinquency, as well as the provision of concrete measures of this case by exposing an educational program, based on experiential activities
<b>PUBLIC</b>	Internal (all trainers involved in this project) and external (external trainers, parents and children facing such a situation or an informed or uninformed public interested in the topic exposed)
<b>FORMAT</b>	Written format
<b>TIME</b>	2016
<b>AIM</b>	Awareness regarding the prevention and fight against juvenile delinquency, as well as the provision of concrete measures of this case by exposing an educational program, based on experiential activities
<b>FUNCTION OF THE SOURCE TEXT</b>	The material, proposed by a non-governmental organization, is used in an international project to expose a model of a juvenile delinquency prevention program.
<b>INTRATEXTUAL ELEMENTS</b>	
<b>TOPIC</b>	Juvenile Delinquency
<b>CONTENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Introduction based on the presentation of the concept of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY</li> <li>* Presentation of the psychological profile of an adolescent with behavioural problems</li> <li>* Presentation of the model, structured on arguments, motivations, examples of practical activities</li> <li>* Presentation of educational resources</li> </ul>
<b>INTRATEXTUAL ELEMENTS</b>	
<b>STRUCTURE</b>	The text is structured as a project report, presented in different sections: information/ contents, motivations, skills and practical abilities, resources
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	There are presented specific cultural elements that highlight various experiential learning activities (games, worksheets) and that involve a varied cultural background in order to receive and understand these elements correctly

<sup>11</sup> This example represents only a model of a possible TOSTA for an interdisciplinary translation act (legal field-psychology-education), the specific elements (the first column) being part of a theoretical framework, while the information provided (the second column) being indicated by the author of the present paper (as a student participant to the translation project in 2016).

The second example is extracted from a (non-formal) teaching and learning programme, more exactly from a legal workshop organised by the author of the present paper<sup>12</sup> as PhD student and collaborator of the Department of Applied Modern Languages Cluj-Napoca, a workshop integrated in a course of English Communication for the AML 3rd year students. I found this example relevant for the EU law category, more exactly EU case-law, because the case analysed and presented during the workshop (a Spanish linguist provided an inaccurate translation from English into Romanian for Romanian doctors from a hospital in London) was adapted from a real one.



**Fig. 1.** Professional communication, moot court competition (Workshop Poster)

<sup>12</sup> The workshop was entitled – *Professional communication, moot court competition* – and was organised on 11th April 2019 at The Department of Applied Modern Languages Cluj-Napoca, being presented by the AML 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in collaboration with EMCI 1<sup>st</sup> year students.



The main parts of this workshop were: the analysis of the case from strategic, methodological and thematic; the analysis of the inaccurate translation from linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural perspectives; the identification and the selection of the translation problems and the choice of appropriate solutions, justifying them through specific legal elements (the elaboration of a model of indictment; the presentation of relevant questions under the format of a moot court competition; the exposure of specific roles as prosecutor, defendant, witness, translator, interpreter in order to render the specificity of this legal and translation act under an interdisciplinary approach). Following all these steps, the conclusion is that all the competences presented in the first part of the paper can be replicated as teaching or learning methods, as in the abovementioned example, the students and the teacher (PhD student) being able to discover and analyse the problems and challenges that the legal field and legal translation field implies, from social (communicational), linguistic (terminological) and thematic points of view, while exercising teaching and learning new aspects or skills that can contribute to the personal and professional development.

## Conclusions

All the competences listed and described in this paper can be seen as a necessary reciprocal transfer, from a common translation field to a specialised one (legal translation field), from a single translation competence to transversal competences, from a legal and linguistic approach to an interdisciplinary one. All the theoretical elements exposed and both of the examples offered involve identifying, selecting and using aspects and elements that can be applied to the language, culture or field of the translation act, in accordance with the market or client requirements and the need to transfer the discipline to practice and vice versa.

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# The Challenges and Benefits of Teaching Academic English for Students of Social Sciences

ADRIANA DIANA URIAN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** The present paper aims at identifying the challenges and benefits of teaching Academic English for students of Social Sciences. To begin with, the paper will offer a synopsis of how ESP functions generally and then it will focus on its functionalities in the field of Social Sciences. Then, the current study will pinpoint the challenges teaching Academic English in this field raises and how to overcome these challenges in order to empower the students to achieve language competence skills in the field of Social Sciences. For the purpose of further clarification, the present research paper considers all language competences, speaking, listening, reading, writing and will include an analysis of the most common difficulties the students encounter when making practical use of each competence. Moreover, the paper lists the strategies that have proven to be most efficient in assisting the students in their difficulties and helping them improve their language competence level with the view of further applying it not only in the academic world, but also in their chosen career path. Finally, shifting perspective towards the future, the study attempts at sketching future pathways or strategies that could improve teaching Academic English for students of Social Sciences even further.

**Keywords:** *academic English, English for specialized purposes, social sciences, language competence, teaching techniques.*

## Introduction and General Aspects Related to Teaching English for Specific Purposes

English for specific purposes has become one of the most essential dimensions of academic English language teaching, especially at undergraduate level, given the great variety in the areas of study available to the students as well as the multifold specialist areas of work. Taking only these two factors into consideration, though there needs to be mentioned that many more are responsible for the widespread attraction and utility of ESP, this particular field of language teaching has gained an impetuous momentum

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and, to a certain extent, changed the way academic language teaching at undergraduate level had been handled up until its emergence.

It is perhaps safe to say that in the fast pacing modern world, where intercultural and multicultural communication has become the norm, teaching general English to undergraduates who are immersed in the study of their own field of activity, rather loses its meaning. One of the reasons for this happening, would be the fact that, overtime, the perception has changed from the very general aspect of academic learning to the more specific understanding of the particularities of each field of study. Many undergraduates, as well as the academic body, started questioning the utility of gaining general knowledge in a language, when perhaps more specific language competences, that are also related to the students' area of study, would be far more necessary and far more useful for their recipients in the long run. Thus, ESP started to emerge as a necessity for academic language learning.

Simply put, ESP refers to teaching and learning the specific skills and language needed by particular learners for a particular purpose (Day, 2011). It is normally linked either to acquiring professional proficiency or academic proficiency in a particular area of the language say Law, Chemistry, Mathematics or for the purpose of this study, social sciences. The fact that the nature of ESP is so specifically oriented towards one field of study raises a series of challenges which are regularly not encountered in the practice of teaching general English. While the specific challenges of teaching ESP to undergraduate students of Social Sciences will be thoroughly discussed in what follows, there are a couple of general features of ESP which perhaps need to be addressed presently.

One such feature refers to the fact that ESP can hardly function in an environment designed for elementary and beginner users of the target language. It is not impossible to design an ESP course that addresses such users of the language, but in such a case, certain limitations and variations within the language-specific nature of the course, need to be acknowledged and accepted. The reason for this, is the fact that when dealing with elementary and beginner language users that are committed to acquiring language competences in a specific field of the language, as opposed to the general linguistic spectrum, the recipients lack the basic structures (syntactic, grammatical, lexical) of the target language, thus making the learning process more difficult and the end results less satisfying or downright disappointing. In this situation, an option would be considering a hybrid technique, where general language teaching is combined with specific focus on the language area which makes the purpose of that particular ESP course. But resorting to a hybrid technique might have the tendency to orient the course towards the

more general language register, and neglecting the specific purpose of the course. This can be a setback and it might detract from the key goals and measurables, such as the specific language competences that need to be acquired in the specific language register and not in the general language register.

Another feature that needs to be taken into account and which is essential for ESP language teaching and learning implies a greater focus on the learners' needs, interests and professional orientation. An ideal ESP course will include all of the three elements mentioned above. While the learners' needs and their professional orientation are at least to some extent linked, the component which refers to the learners' interests is more akin to the psychological valence of the learning process, depicting the learners' own handle on motivation, learning techniques and knowledge acquisition efficiency. In fact, what makes ESP such a complex concept is also the fact that it is founded on certain principles from within the area of educational psychology (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and therefore, considers such elements as the learners' own outlook on the learning process as well as the varying ways in which language skills are acquired by different types of learners.

The focus on learners makes the needs' analysis a central feature of ESP. Even though the needs' analysis is a practice which doesn't only apply to ESP and it is widely encountered in teaching general English as well, within ESP, the needs' analysis is quintessential, especially because it needs to consider an array of details, pertaining to the specificity of the linguistic field it is related to, as well as the utility of the corpus within the practical and professional area of the recipients. There are different approaches to what needs to be considered when undergoing a needs' analysis for an ESP course. Some of the most common approaches refer to considering: a target-situation analysis, a present-situation analysis, a learning-centered approach and in addition performing language audits, a means analysis, a strategy analysis and even considering self-assessment to be performed by the recipients. Irrespective of the manner in which it is performed or what means are preferred for achieving its purpose, any needs' analysis should start from a set of questions which challenge the courses' *raison d'être*. Several pertinent examples in this direction could be: Why is the language needed? How will the language be used? What will the content areas be? Where will the language be used? When will the language be used? etc. In addition, when considering the what's and how's of an ESP course, needs should also be subdivided into lacks, limitations, wants, while considering the minimum amount of language competence that the learners need to possess in order for the course to function properly. As mentioned above, an elementary or beginner

level learner may not manage to master the language competences required by an ESP course, irrespective of the specific language area of that course, be it Law or Social Sciences or any other.

While the concept of ESP has a set of particularities of its own, it is important to understand, at this level, that ESP is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and that there is no specific teaching methodology which applies solely to ESP courses. The difference between ESP and general language teaching lies mostly in the content, in the nature of the lexical body that the recipients of the course need to acquire, as well as the context, the structures and processes which inevitably envelop it. However, strictly from a conceptual, methodological standpoint, ESP doesn't stand out as a practice completely different and disconnected from the regular and general language teaching tactics. Yet, even so, developments and tendencies in this area have seen a great development in the last years and teaching ESP is an ever-moving and ever-evolving practice. Boundaries that might not have existed when ESP was starting to emerge as a new, independent concept, are perhaps a bit more defined in the present-day realities and at least in a way, certain methodologies have developed and can be associated with the specific area of teaching ESP.

Thus, ESP represents a newer and more tailored approach to language teaching which better answers the demands of the burgeoning areas of language which seem to develop at the same rate with the fast-pacing modern environment. In what follows, the central features of ESP will be balanced against classroom realities within the specific field of social sciences, with the purpose of illustrating the challenges it raises and the benefits it creates for its recipients.

### **English For Social Sciences within the Academic Environment**

English for Social Sciences (ESS) is one of the larger categories of ESP according to the general nature of the learners' specialism. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguish three such categories of ESP: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE) and, naturally, English for Social Sciences (ESS), but while the authors assert that ESS is not a very common branch of ESP, as it is thought not to differ significantly from the more traditionally based general English for Humanities, ESS should be considered an independent branch within the diverse and very complex structure of ESP. The main argument in support of this view is that the field of Social Sciences, is in itself a separate and specific area of the English language which, while maintaining a certain connection with the field of Humanities, also expands and specializes in a different

register of the English language. It is true that, the more general aspect of the field of Social Sciences refers to the study of human society and culture, thus justifying its inclusion within the broader context of the Humanities. Nonetheless, there are certain areas within the field of Social Sciences such as the area of Social Assistance (where caregiving can also be included) for instance, where the lexis is specific, addressing a set of unique activities and processes that occur only in this particular area of activity.

As part of the academic environment, teaching English for Social Sciences is oriented towards achieving the specific language competences within this specific field, at an academic level and not necessarily at a professional level. As such, at this stage, it would be useful to expand on the connection between ESP and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EAP should probably be best understood as a context of ESP, a smaller branch within the ESP spectrum, where the language competences acquired would still pertain to a specific field, in this case the field of Social Sciences, but their utility would be confined to completing an academic course and not necessarily to prepare professionals who will activate as social workers or caregivers. Indeed, a good part of the language competences that the recipients of the course will acquire in the end, are meant to have applicability within the realities of Social Assistance or caregiving, but from the offset, the course is design to resonate with academic goals, rather than have a pure and singular professional applicability.

### ***The Benefits of Teaching EAP in the Field of Social Sciences***

Despite the fact that an EAP course is designed to primarily serve academic purposes, thus raising a series of disadvantages when it comes to the sheer applicability of the language competences in the recipients' specific field of activity, there are also several practical benefits that arise from having an EAP course in the field of Social Sciences. One of the main benefits is the fact that the recipients develop a full set of language competences, speaking, listening, reading and writing, precisely in the field of their studies. Thus, to a certain extent, the language course either complements or enhances the specialist knowledge in their field and concomitantly, the students also acquire the ability to relate to their field of study from a different perspective, other than what is offered through their native tongue.

The structure of the course addressing the students of Social Sciences is branched according to the specificity of each line of study, so the purpose of the course would differ for students of Social Care, Sociology and Human Resources. This division helps to better individualize the different needs of the learners, which vary greatly in accordance to the practical valences of each field



of study. In addition, it allows a better focus on the specificity of each field, since despite the course being mainly an EAP course, it also aims to assist learners in their efforts to acquire the language competences they need, in order to achieve the occupational goals they might have set for themselves.

### *Benefits and Challenges Concerning the Speaking and Reading Competences as Part of EAP for Social Sciences*

When it comes to the speaking and reading competences, the corpora included different topics meant to cover the area of interests of the various study lines which fall under the larger umbrella of the Social Sciences. As such, students specializing in social work encountered topics that were quite akin to their professional formation such as discussing various aspects surrounding families both modern and traditional, disability rights and the difficulties people with disabilities are faced with in their country. Other topics included ageing and even migration. There were also a few topics that were related to the broader area of sociology, the reasoning behind this being that it was an EAP course and not specifically a course whose goal was to achieve immediate occupational and professional competences. Nonetheless, one of the secondary goals of the course was to retain, at least to a certain degree, a level of practicality that the students could find use for, in their future professions. Naturally, the students specializing in Human Resources encountered topics which were directly connected to their area of study, comprising the basic activities of the Human Resources department, strategic planning within the Human Resources department, communication with employees, training strategies. The discussions on the afore mentioned topics, which took the form of debates, brainstorming sessions, free opinion sharing, encouraged the students to actively take part in the class activities and share their thoughts with the rest of their peers, in a context which also targets the use of specialized vocabulary. In order for the students to assimilate better specific and specialized notions related to each topic, most of the speaking activities stemmed from a pre-given text on the topic. This is why, the reading and the speaking competences came to be interlinked in the present study, in order to assist the students in becoming accustomed to, understanding and assimilating the key vocabulary elements and make use of them during the discussions, when practicing the speaking competence.

The advantage of engaging in a free discussion on a specialized topic is that the students feel encouraged to contribute, decreasing the level of reluctance they might experience, with more constraints applied to the speaking activity. One of the challenges in the case of such speaking activities

arose from the fact that the language level competence of the students in each group was not uniform. In these situations, it is usually the more advanced students that “set the tone” for the class, which can inhibit contributions from students whose language competence level is lower, but who, on the other hand, would benefit more from making active contributions in class, as part of the speaking activities. This feature became apparent both with the Social Assistance groups and with the Human Resources group and it is after all a general feature of all classrooms with students of unequal competence levels. The true challenge is represented by the manner in which these “tone setting” circumstances are overcome. Two very undesirably negative forces are at play here. On the one hand, discouraging the students with higher competences to contribute would mean that they will be forced to gain fewer benefits from the course or not to benefit from the course at all. On the other hand, inaction on the part of the teacher, would negatively influence the learning environment of the students with lower competences, who would simply cease to contribute. One also needs to bear in mind that both groups of students need to be able to demonstrate content and speaking genre expertise, particularly for oral presentation (Paltridge & Starfield eds. 2013) and especially for the language competence exam which is the final form of assessment for the EAP course, hence its predominantly academic dominant. Dealing with this kind of impediment is a delicate issue. One of the efficient ways of overcoming such an obstacle is to create groups or pairs in which students of lower competence levels can work together with students of higher competence level. This way, by engaging the different types of actors of these speaking activities into a collaborative environment, a good part of the initial set-backs might be overcome. The efficiency lies in the way in which the forces are at play. The lower-level competence students receive assistance from the higher-level competence students. When the groups/pairs are asked to report back and join in the general discussion with the rest of the groups, the lower competence level students will feel empowered to contribute, feeling that they have received the collaborative support of their higher performing peers and they will also be able to overcome the initial reluctance to contribute in front of the rest of the class. Concomitantly, the higher competence level students are not deprived of their own right to benefit from the course and they can do so by mentoring their lower-competence peers.

This method is a win-win from so many vantage points. It encourages universal participation of all students, it increases the level of collaboration both at micro level and at macro level, it ensures that all students benefit from the course and receive their spot-light time within the speaking activity. The methodology is sound even from a purely psychological perspective. Both groups of students feel empowered in a positive way, both groups feel that

their needs are considered and both groups collaboratively create a positive and efficient learning environment.

The present study includes the analysis of the speaking and reading competences together, especially since the speaking activities generally have texts as starting points, but also since there are a few situational similarities regarding the manner in which the students function as a group and individually, when acquiring content skills as part of each competence. The similarities with the situational aspect of the speaking competence refer to the heterogeneous group of recipients in terms of language competence and their reception of a range of texts, with specialized content, of a B1-B2 level of difficulty. Higher level competence students could once again take precedence over lower level competence students. Still, the reading competence poses a few more interesting particularities and dilemmas, directly related to the field of ESS, which will be considered in what follows. The mindset behind the use of texts in teaching an EAP course in the field of Social Sciences is to offer the students the chance come into contact with, observe and understand the use of the specialized language in context. Considering the needs of the students, the topics of the texts are not arbitrary, but rather purposefully applied, in full relevance with either the field of Social Assistance, the field of Human Resources or the broader field of Sociology.

The reading competence in the field of ESS requires the acquisition of a set of basic reading skills such as: simple identification skills (decoding), higher level cognitive skills (analyzing, synthesizing, predicting). The reading comprehension exercises use the SQ3R technique according to which students are required to: survey the text, look over headings, identify the core ideas of the text; to create questions for the text headings; to find answers in the text; to formulate answers in their own words; to summarize the text in their own words. The texts' level of difficulty ranges between shorter texts, which focus on vocabulary acquisition and observing grammar in context to more extensive texts, focusing on the higher-level cognitive skills. Despite the students' heterogeneous language competence level, there are quite a few benefits which derive from reading comprehension activities as part of the EAP course for Social Sciences. To begin with, from the content of the text they become informed on topics related to their area of study or activity, the texts also provide them with discipline-specific academic vocabulary in context, which should ensure a better and more efficient acquisition of specific terminology. In addition, on a deeper level, texts help with and provide access to exploring certain textual features, relating to the logical organization of the textual material and to the textual development of argumentation, which will also be useful in developing writing skills, as part of the writing competence.

Most of the challenges raised at this stage involved the extensive texts, channeling the higher-level cognitive skills. The problems the students encountered included unknown words, most of which were items belonging to the field-specific area of the vocabulary, but also their text coverage skills appeared to be quite low, especially with B2 level texts, due to a deficient language competence level and a lower level of background knowledge, notably when they possessed little to no knowledge about the topic of the text, prior to class. Because of these impediments, it became apparent that such “lacks” or “wants” need to be considered in the needs’ analysis, when elaborating the structure and content of the EAP course for the students of Social Sciences. In order to overcome these obstacles and make the pathway smoother towards achieving the proper reading comprehensions skills for the students, certain practical measures need to be considered as well. One such measure would be including practice sample texts, of varying levels of complexity, starting naturally from shorter and more accessible texts and progressing gently towards more complex B2 level texts (B2 being the absolute difficulty limit). The texts should include practical exercises requiring students to perform shorter tasks, such as identifying the headings, taking out the main ideas, identifying the logical connectors as well as understanding when and how they should be used in order to achieve textual coherence. Once the students move from the easier texts towards the more complex materials, they will acquire improved textual comprehension skills, which will also help them tackle the specific vocabulary more efficiently and understand how they can use it correctly from visualizing it in context, rather than learning it as part of a strictly mechanical memory process.

Improving on the reading comprehension skills and insisting that the recipients understand that the textual competence is essential for the development of a set of practical language skills, which will be useful not only in the academic context of the course, but also in their future professional activities, is a perspective that both the students and the teacher should adhere to, and work on achieving together, in a collectively supported effort.

### *Benefits and Challenges Concerning the Writing Competence as Part of EAP for Social Sciences*

The writing competence is perhaps one of the most central activities of academic performance and therefore, it can be considered one of the core competences of an EAP course, in any specific field, including the field of Social Sciences. In Paltridge and Starfield eds. (2013) the writing competence is described as being related to the most complex social activities like

educating students, keeping records, engaging with customers, selling products, demonstrating learning and disseminating ideas. Thus, it results quite clearly that the writing competence is to a very great extent engendered within the rest of the core language competences the recipients of an EAP course need to acquire, at an academic level and beyond. Still, within the prerequisites of a course with such a specific orientation as a course in English for specific purposes, with academic applications, teaching the writing competence is not quite identical with teaching a generic writing course, especially since there are certain specific target elements to be considered.

Normally, a regular class in English for specific purposes targeting occupational proficiency in the field of the Social Sciences would focus on specific target genres when considering the writing competence. This means that, for instance, future social workers would work on report writing, given that reports represent a major part of the daily activities of a social worker. On the other hand, when referring to the area of Human Resources, a specific genre could refer to elaborating strategic plans such as designing an HR strategy, an HR training and development plan, in addition to the regular HR reporting documents and more menial activities related to the HR department. In the case of an EAP course, whose aim is typically to achieve academic language competences in a specific field, not necessarily focusing specifically on occupational competences, teaching the writing competence can focus on producing a coherent and correct academic text, with specific lexical content on topics related to the field of activity of the recipients. The benefits of such a course, even in its more reduced, academic dimension, are still pertinent and their applicability exceeds the mere academic requirements and can help the students in their occupational activities. In this manner, the students can use the skills acquired as part of the reading competence and apply them in producing academic texts with specific topics related to their field.

There are a series of challenges in teaching writing skills in general, but even more so when teaching academic writing that is specific for an occupation or a line of study. In Paltridge and Starfield eds. (2013) it is quite legitimately noted that:

From a student's point of view, a dominant feature of academic literacy is the requirement to switch practices between one setting and another, to control a range of genres appropriate to each setting, and to handle the meanings and identities that each evokes. One problem for students, however, is that while achievement is assessed by various institutionalized forms of writing, what it means to write in this way is rarely made explicit to students (Paltridge and Starfield, 2013, p. 97).

In the case of students of Social Sciences as well, one of the main and most poignant impediments in acquiring academic writing skills stems from

this area of indeterminacy well engendered in the student behavior of “not being quite sure how to” relate to an academic text. The students who have fewer, to no difficulties in this area are, quite obviously, those students who have prepared for and obtained a mainstream language competence certificate (Cambridge, IELTS), because academic writing or producing a coherent text of any nature is a mandatory requirement for the candidates. For the rest of the students, surpassing this impediment required, first and foremost, presenting what an academic text is, explaining its universal, logical structure and only afterwards engaging in producing shorter written materials, containing opinion-based accounts on topics related to the students’ study area. This approach seemed to yield better results, especially in a group of students of varying competence levels.

Looking beyond the mere language competences of the students involved, when referring to the writing competence, ESP literature also considers the fact that writing, as well as speaking for that matter, engages a set of psychological mechanisms, including the way in which different aspects of their learning, interact with each other and with other previous experiences. As such, writing is more than a simple competence through which students express isolated strands of vocabulary on a given topic, it is also an expression of the students’ cultural and epistemological underpinnings (Paltridge and Starfield eds. 2013). These features were also encountered with the students of Social Sciences, when elaborating academic texts or samples of text genres more specific to their field. The psychological mechanisms which are such a great part of the students’ personality and way of seeing the world may prove to be quite difficult to alter or improve, especially in the case of those students who also present lower competence levels. Nonetheless, involving even these students in writing activities is a positive way of helping them gain some degree of control over the specific texts they need to tackle, as well as an invitation for the students to take control of their learning. Of course, the latter involves a great degree of commitment from the part of the students, as well as their interest in acquiring the necessary skills and competences. In ESP, just like in any other environment where learning is involved, the learning process needs mutual involvement from both the teacher and the recipients.

While producing academic texts with specific topics from the students’ study area, as was the case with the students of Social Assistance proved to yield satisfying results, when writing more genre specific texts, as was the case with students of Human Resources, proved to be more challenging. A possible explanation for this situation could be the fact that the students were in no sense familiar with the concept of corporate documents, and had very little previous knowledge regarding what a strategic corporate

document entails. The students were eased into lower difficulty writing activities which focused on acquiring the specific, technical vocabulary needed in order to elaborate such documents, on the structure of such a document and on reading and visualizing various samples of strategic corporate documents specific for the HR department. The process proved quite strenuous, especially because of the lack of uniformity in terms of language competence levels. Still, the levelled and quite structured approach on writing this type of documents, as well as blending in a couple of the skills related to reading comprehension, revealed that the writing skills of the students improved to a particular degree, even in the case of those students of lower language competence levels.

The demands of the academic system as well as the workplace environment attest the importance of the writing competence, especially a writing competence which specializes or works with improving both the students' academic writing skills and their specialized writing skills, when possible. Looking away from the numerous challenges which can be overcome by resorting to well-structured and well-designed methods implemented in the needs' analysis phase, one also needs to keep in mind that the benefits the students get out of a well-designed EAP course are far more numerous and their applicability far exceeds the academic domain. It is also useful perhaps, to consider that whatever methods are employed, they also need to be tailored according to each group of students, thus obtaining a better calibration between the students' needs, the teacher's expectations and the aims of the course itself.

### *Benefits and Challenges Concerning the Listening Competence as Part of EAP for Social Sciences*

The listening competence constitutes an interesting component within the ESP environment. To start with, it is quite difficult to design audio materials which specifically target specific English uses in a certain field of activity. With the area of Academic English, the situation is less complicated as an EAP course would allow the use of listening materials with specific focus on the students' study lines, bearing in mind that these listening materials were not designed with precise ESP aims in mind. Still, the listening component is also an important part of the language competence spectrum, and it cannot be excluded from the structure of a complete EAP course. When considering the occupational activities of the students of Social Sciences, the listening component seems to take a secondary place, when balanced against the rest of the competences. This occurs because, for instance, the students of

Social Assistance, most of whom will become future social workers, will have very little chance to use their foreign language listening skills in their daily activities. The situation is quite different for the students of Human Resources, where the listening component applied to their field will be useful both for their academic preparation and for their occupational ends. Either way, both groups of students can benefit from second language listening instruction, which aims at developing their active listening skills and use these skills to facilitate comprehension and interaction (Paltridge & Starfield eds., 2013). In addition, it could also improve the students' comprehension and listening development and assist them in further understanding the use of the vocabulary, specific to their field.

The listening materials considered for the groups of students studying the different domains of Social Sciences were mostly EAP listening materials, containing topics that were directly related to their field of study. The focus was directed towards the students' understanding and acquiring the core vocabulary and improving their listening and comprehension skills in the field. For the students of Social Assistance, the great majority of the listening materials consisted of brief videos presenting, discussing or debating core topics related to their field. For the students of Human Resources, the audio materials included situations related to various activities within the Human Resource department, pinpointing specific occupational situations, thus, in this case the listening materials were more ESP oriented.

To a certain extent, ESP or even EAP listening, does not differ significantly from general English listening, as it involves the same cognitive processes and it requires the use of the same core skills that enable effective attention to information in accord with the purpose for listening (Paltridge & Starfield eds., 2013). The great difference would appear in the case of English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), where the listening materials would necessarily have to reflect occupational situations within the recipients' specific area of activity. In the case of an EAP course, the differences are not too poignant or apparent. The listening materials included presentations, dialogues or discussions of varying difficulty and length. Despite the modern-day afflux of information available in the language of the EAP course, English namely, a significant number of students presented difficulties with the listening comprehension, especially concerning the more extensive and complex listening materials, where more convoluted and inferred pieces of information needed to be extracted from the material. Difficulties emerged in the case of those materials which were more ESP oriented, pertaining to a



more technical register and a vocabulary that was not necessarily part of their day-to-day register, but more field oriented. A possible cause arises from the fact that ESP learning materials are addressed to learners with an intermediate level of proficiency, a situation which does not fit well with the heterogeneous nature of the student groups, posing high difficulties for those students with lower language competence levels. The latter group were not as experienced as their more advanced counterparts and therefore lacked essential language proficiency skills that would have helped them overcome their comprehension obstacles. Successful listening comprehension can occur only when listeners possess three types of knowledge: knowledge about the language (phonology, syntax, vocabulary), knowledge about language use (discourse and pragmatic), and knowledge about context, facts and experiences. All these apply also in the area of ESP and EAP.

Overcoming such critical obstacles is very strenuous in the case of the listening comprehension competence. There is very little the teaching situation and methodology can achieve when confronted with the reality of lacking elementary, general language skills, which was the case of some of the students. While such deficiencies can more easily be conquered in the case of the reading or the writing comprehension, this is not the case with the listening comprehension, which requires on-the spot knowledge and understanding. This is also why, improving listening comprehension proficiency proved to be one of the greatest challenges of the EAP course addressed to students of Social Sciences. There are certain strategies that can be employed in order to ease the process, such as: present and underline the specific vocabulary which is part of the listening material the students are about to hear, structuring the course in such a manner that the students can follow a narrative thread and apply it in the listening material as well, allowing the students more time to listen to the materials and eventually take notes, assist the students in developing effective learning strategies that could help them cope with more complex listening materials, even when their language competence levels are lower than average (lower than B2, borderline A2-B1).

To a very great extent, achieving language proficiency as part of an EAP course needs to be understood as a collective effort between the teacher and the students. The teacher functions as a designer, coordinator, motivator and enabler, while the recipients need to engage and fill in the pre-assigned content with interest, willingness and commitment as well as possessing a set of, at least, pre-intermediate language-competence levels. Being such a specific field of language, success cannot be achieved without a collaborative input.

## Conclusions

The demands of the academic system as well as workplace related requirements impose the necessity for an EAP course in Social Sciences. Even though the course channels language competences, whose application is mostly designed to serve academic purposes, the recipients of the course gain a series of pertinent benefits which can be used both in the academic environment and to serve some of the occupational needs of their future career related activities.

While there are quite a few challenges that need to be overcome as part of the teaching and learning process, challenges that refer to the heterogeneity of the student group, the varying learning and cultural mechanisms of the recipients, dealing with a specific and at times technical vocabulary, the success of the course from the perspective of the teacher and the students depends very much on the committed collaborative effort to communicate and gain knowledge.

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# QA Insights into the Motivations, Perceptions and Opportunities of BA Students and Alumni as Concerns Their Studies in Norwegian at Babeş-Bolyai University

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the findings of three previous research studies that have been conducted in order to provide a broader perspective on the motivations, perceptions and job opportunities of students who study or have studied Norwegian at Bachelor's level at Babeş-Bolyai University, while considering the higher education quality assurance standards and guidelines. Thus, insights are provided as concerns the factors that have led to a gradual increase in the number of students who wanted to be granted a BA in Norwegian Language and Literature. In addition, data are offered related to the Alumni perceptions of their studies in Norwegian. Having in mind a continuity of the BA programme in Norwegian, the paper also focuses on the necessity of designing a MA programme in Norwegian Literary and Non-Literary Translations in order to bridge the BA and PhD opportunities for academic studies.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian language; BA programme in Norwegian language and literature; Babeş-Bolyai University; higher education; quality assurance; motivation; perceptions; opportunities.*

## Introduction

Globalization and internationalization of education coupled with a high mobility of work force have given people a strong impetus for learning a foreign language. Thus, a considerable amount of research has been

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conducted toward investigating the factors and the individual variables that influence the learning of a second or a foreign language. The promoters of such an investigation were Gardner and Lambert (1959) who brought into discussion the essential role played by motivation. Important predictors of successful foreign language acquisition are attitude and motivation (Kohonen, 1992), or aptitude and motivation (Skehan, 1991). Motivation and its salient role in foreign language learning has been addressed also by Dörnyei who asserts that “without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals” (1998, 117). All the other individual differences (age, personality, mother tongue, etc.) are not so strong predictors of achievement, as motivation is. It is the fuel much needed to keep learners on track, in the long run. Learning a foreign language comes with much effort and motivation is the variable that sustains the necessary diligence and hard work (Pop, 2019). Therefore, this paper investigates the central role played by motivation in enrolling in the BA programme in Norwegian.

According to the Eurydice Report (European Commission, 2017, p. 47) English, French, German, Italian, Spanish or Turkish are the foreign languages that can be studied in schools in Romania (at primary and secondary level). In higher education, at university level, in the case of faculties of philology from Romania, the offer is varied, and students can choose from a variety of languages. A small language, such as the case of Norwegian, can be studied at higher education level only at Babeș-Bolyai University (BBU) in Cluj-Napoca, as a major and minor specialization in Norwegian language and literature<sup>7</sup>. A constantly increasing number of students enrolling every year at the courses offered by the Department of Scandinavian languages and literature at BBU provided the starting point for a larger project comprising three distinct studies. These aimed at identifying the reasons which led to a growing interest in the study of Norwegian, alumni’s perception of the academic and job opportunities they have gained after successfully completing their BA degree in Norwegian and the opportunity of developing the available three semester *optional MA course of Norwegian language, culture and literature* offered by our department into an independent MA programme. The objective of designing a full MA programme is to create a bridge between the Bachelor’s and the PhD programme taking into account data gathered on students’ motivation and satisfaction with their existing study programme, their career paths and

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<sup>7</sup> In Baia-Mare, students enrolled at “Mihai Eminescu” National College can choose Norwegian as an optional foreign language course for two years in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (2 hours/week).

employability, as well as the uniqueness of their academic formation on a national level in Romania (*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, [ESG], 2015, p. 14, 1.7).

The current paper aims to connect the results of these three previous studies in order to point out a manifold perspective: on the one hand the research focused on investigating students' motivation and satisfaction with the Norwegian study programme coupled with their job opportunities after graduation; in addition, emphasis was placed on the necessity of introducing a MA programme in Norwegian in order to design a bridge between the BA and the PhD Norwegian studies. On the other hand, the three research studies were grounded in the ESG standards and guidelines in order to enhance the quality of the Norwegian language and literary programme at BBU. Therefore, given the uniqueness and the context of studying Norwegian at BBU, due to the fact that no other higher institution in Romania offers Norwegian at Bachelor's level, it was not possible to relate our findings to previous studies targeting the main directions indicated above.

### **Historic overview**

Norwegian language education has been offered at BBU since 1991 and the programme has undergone changes ever since in line with the educational policies established in Romania as the country became in 1997 a member state of the EU. The four-year programme of Norwegian language and literature at BA level has been the first of its kind in the Romanian academic environment. The country was seizing the opportunities to diversify its educational offer after the Romanian Revolution in 1989. Starting from 1991, Norwegian has been offered as a minor specialization in combination with a major in among other studies such as English, French, German or Italian. The Norwegian language and literature programme soon became an emblematic one, not only for BBU but also at a national level, attracting already in its first four years of establishment a number of 80 students from all over Romania (although the programme was given during that period only every second year, except the academic year 1992-1993).

Adapting to the new educational policies in Europe stipulated by the Bologna Declaration, Romanian universities underwent reforms which led to changes in the BA language and literature programmes: 3 BA studies + 2 MA studies + 3 PhD studies. Thus, the Bachelor's programmes were reduced from four to three years and MA programmes were extended to two years. The Bologna process contributed to a much higher addressability of the academic studies by attracting a higher number of students.

As a consequence, the Norwegian programme was enriched with a major in Norwegian language and literature beginning with 2008, when it was accredited at BBU in addition to the already existing minor programme. Thus, it contributed to a further rise in the number of students and in the popularity of the programme nationwide. It is worth mentioning that PhD studies of Norwegian literature already exist at BBU since 2010, the only link needed for a full academic degree, being the MA programme in Norwegian.

### **Context for quality assurance standards**

Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca occupied the first place in the National University Metaranking Exercise of 2016, belonging to the category of Romanian Universities with potential for excellence, visible and with international impact. This is the latest report prepared by the Ministry of Education with the aim of analysing the positioning of the Romanian universities in the international profile rankings. The analysis revealed that 20 out of the 92 state universities cross a minimum threshold of international visibility (Metaranking, 2016, p. 1). These results show BBU's commitment to the values promoted by the Bologna Declaration, as well as the steps taken towards becoming a world-class university.

The Bologna Process began with the Bologna Declaration, to which Romania readily adhered from the very beginning, in 1999, and its aim was to harmonize the higher education systems in Europe (Crosier & Parveva, 2013, p. 6), but also to strengthen the quality of education by implementing a system of quality assurance. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was hence created, reuniting 48 countries that work together in order to ensure the compatibility of the European higher education systems. Furthermore, the Ministers of education from the member countries adopted in 2005 a first set of standards for quality assurance in higher education, which were later developed and adopted in final form as *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), a reference document for quality assurance in higher education systems, that underlines the crucial role of quality assurance in supporting higher education systems and institutions in responding to the challenges of the globalized world (ESG, 2015, p. 6). According to *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Study Programmes*, our teaching staff has permanently been preoccupied with both internal (at department level) and external (through ARACIS, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) quality assurance of the Norwegian language and literature programme at BBU. At national level, ARACIS is the agency that carries out the external evaluation

of quality in the higher education institutions, and the BA programme in Norwegian has received excellent scores on all evaluations conducted so far.

Out of the internal quality assurance standards specified in ESG, the standard dedicated to the *Design and approval of programmes* (1.2), namely

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015, p. 11)

states that programmes are designed by involving both students and other stakeholders.

Since the Norwegian language and literature is the only academic programme of its kind in Romania, its initiator, together with the faculty members involved in the programme, have considered their task to analyse its academic profile. According to ESG, “it is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities” (ESG, 2015, p. 14). Consequently, the method we used in our previous articles was based on collecting and interpreting information from current students and alumni mirroring the degree of quality assurance of the programme. Thus, we gathered and analysed items concerning the Norwegian programme at BBU: “Profile of the student population; Student progression, success and drop-out rates; Students’ satisfaction with their programmes; Learning resources and student support available; Career paths of graduates.” (ESG, 2015, p. 14)<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, one of the quality assurance indicators at BBU (2020) that measures the standard *The study programmes respond, through flexibility, content and organization, to the students’ needs of personal and professional development* within the framework of *Educational effectiveness* is: *the faculties make use of student, alumni and employer consultation in order to analyse the relevance of the study programmes* (namely the number and types of studies and analyses conducted) (BBU, 2020).

The Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature found it important to ask for feedback from the stakeholders involved in the educational process. Because the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature is the only department in the country offering Norwegian at a BA level, its uniqueness comes with increased responsibility to ensure quality

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/ESG_2015.pdf)



academic results that are visible and valuable on the job market. Hence, there is a constant preoccupation for ensuring quality in terms of educational processes, but also for improvement and development. Being aware that there is no other programme in Norwegian being offered in Romania and building on the positive feedback given by respondents<sup>9</sup>, this analysis is a useful instrument for evaluation, as well as for laying the basis of a Master's programme in Norwegian.

In Romania, there is a growing demand of professional and quality translations associated with employment and career paths linked to Norwegian. Our department has engaged in several partnerships with private institutions and companies in order to offer students internships to improve both their knowledge of Norwegian and their work-related skills. Since employers do not usually hire graduates who do not have prior job-related experience, these collaborations with national and international institutions in Cluj-Napoca help our students to gain that experience. Thus, the trainings they perform during these partnerships contribute to increasing the quality of the services offered and the job outcomes.

## Research methodology

As mentioned above, this paper analyses the findings of the three interlinked research studies which had as starting points different research questions and different target groups in order to investigate motivation for learning Norwegian, job opportunities after graduation and interest for enrolling in a master programme in Norwegian. Indirectly, these three research studies highlighted results that can enhance the quality assurance process of the Norwegian language and literary programme at BBU. The basis for the three preceding studies were questionnaires comprising closed-ended (multiple choice and Likert scale) and open-ended questions that led to a qualitative and a quantitative analysis of the results. Both the open-ended and the closed-ended questions from the three questionnaires tackled areas of quality assurance. The closed-ended questions report back on respondents' view of the academic background provided by the department<sup>10</sup> or to the suitability of the teaching

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<sup>9</sup> 83% of alumni are motivated to study Norwegian because it offered better career perspectives in a global world (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020), 84, 9% of the respondents are motivated to study Norwegian at Bachelor's level because it is a rare language and it offers advantages in many areas (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

<sup>10</sup> 69.8% of the respondents agreed that the studies at the department have developed their ability to think abstractly and critically (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

methods<sup>11</sup> and of the teaching resources employed when teaching Norwegian<sup>12</sup>. The open-ended question – “What recommendations would you make for the improvement of the teaching-learning process at the Scandinavian department?” – provided answers suggesting that the teaching of Norwegian is very intensive and useful, but also some suggestions for further improvements (more focus on practical courses such as interpretation and translations) (Sanda Tomescu et al., 2019).

It is important to mention that the data was gathered from three different sets of respondents and thus the findings from the three distinct studies cannot be compared directly with quantitative statistical methods. Below we give an overview of the main conclusions of the previous studies.

The first paper was entitled *Understanding the Factors that Have Influenced the Gradual Increase in the Number of Students Wishing to Be Granted A BA in Norwegian Language and Literature*. The findings of this study indicated that several factors pertaining both to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019:265), have contributed to the growth in the number of students at the BA programme. One extrinsic element refers to the fact that by enrolling in the BA programme in Norwegian at BBU students are offered a niche specialization<sup>13</sup> that contributes to providing both academic and job opportunities. An intrinsic element refers to learning Norwegian because of the interest for Norwegian culture and civilization<sup>14</sup>.

Target group: undergraduate students from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study within the Norwegian language and literature BA programme, in total 86 respondents.

The second paper was entitled *The Alumni Perceptions of their BA programme in Norwegian at Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania*. This study investigated the alumni's perception of the benefit of their BA degree in Norwegian. One of the main findings is that 63.5% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that the BA programme prepared them for their first or current job which indicates the relevancy of the study programme for the Romanian society. (Tomescu Baciuc et. al, *forthcoming*).

Target group: alumni of the BA programme in Norwegian who graduated from 2000 to 2020. The total number of respondents was 123.

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<sup>11</sup> 82.5% of the respondents like the teaching methods used at the department (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

<sup>12</sup> 77.9% are satisfied and very satisfied with the teaching resources used (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

<sup>13</sup> A total of 85% of the respondents strongly or fairly agree that they chose Norwegian because it is a rare language in Romania (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

<sup>14</sup> A total of 55% of the respondents strongly or fairly agree that they began studying Norwegian because they were interested in the Norwegian culture (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

The third paper in the series was entitled *Context for Designing a MA programme in Norwegian Literary and Non-Literary Translations at Babeș-Bolyai University*. The results established that “95.2% of the respondents would be interested in enrolling for a pilot MA programme Norwegian literary and non-literary translations” (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020).

Target group: alumni (graduates from 2014 to 2019) and current students of the BA programme in Norwegian language and literature, in total 147 respondents.

In order to make the survey accessible to all respondents, regardless of language proficiency in Norwegian, the questionnaires were implemented in English and Romanian. In the first and second study the questionnaires were written in English because findings have been presented in an international context, while the third study was written in Romanian because findings would be more useful to the Dean’s office or to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education for designing a MA programme. Answering to the questionnaires was optional and a relative short time frame was provided in order for the respondents to submit their answers in written form (the first study used paper-based questionnaires) or digitally (the second and third questionnaires were created in google forms).

## Motivation

The findings of the first study concluded that the learning of Norwegian as a foreign language is grounded in both intrinsic motivational factors (language itself, the Norwegian culture) and extrinsic motivational factors (local economic factors, the Norwegian welfare system, the department’s reputation, job opportunities and increased student mobility). Thus, almost 82% of the respondents understand the value of internationalization abroad and agree and strongly agree with the need to be offered scholarships in Norway (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019). These scholarships constitute salient opportunities to have a direct contact with the Norwegian language and culture and therefore, can constitute strong motivational factors. Students’ motivation to keep studying Norwegian might have also been stimulated by the various extracurricular activities<sup>15</sup> – Glomma Choir, the celebrations of Nordic Christmas and Norway’s National Day, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, Cluj Days – where students represented the department. Moreover, the students’ access to books and resources is facilitated by the

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<sup>15</sup> 53.5% of the respondents agreed that extracurricular activities are relevant to them (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2019).

Library of Nordic Studies. In addition, 96.5% of the respondents from our first survey chose to study Norwegian due to the department's very good reputation and recommendations, which is indicative of teachers' professionalism coupled with teaching practices and opportunities to study abroad (Tomescu Baciú et al., 2019).

Motivation can be instrumental (i.e. the desire to learn a language in order to pass an exam or to get a good job) or integrative (i.e. the desire to communicate better with the target language speakers) (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). One of the most important parts of the instrumental motivation is the ambition to have a career in the field (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner, 1985). Indeed, on all our three surveys, the vast majority of the participants declared themselves motivated and prepared to start a career in the field, thus proving that the learning process was successful. The findings indicated the importance of classroom activities, and of self-confidence, two elements that increase the student's success in the job market.

Another strong link that we observed in our surveys is the one between motivation and contextual factors such as learning outcomes and job opportunities related to Norwegian. The students' transition from university to a career in the field was described as an important issue by the vast majority of the alumni, while it was not specifically referred to as a problematic question for the students enrolled in the first year as they have two more years to consider the path to follow after graduation. However, motivation is not a linear or predictable process and other factors might be useful to consider as well. The second paper concluded that respondents have two perspectives regarding their motivation to study Norwegian: while 83% of them were motivated to study Norwegian because it offered better career perspectives in a global world, 82% of the respondents strongly agreed that they studied Norwegian because they want to get a job that would allow them to use the Norwegian language skills they have acquired during their BA studies (Tomescu Baciú et al., *forthcoming*). Thus, motivation stems from different directions, either intrinsic and extrinsic and the quality of motivation can vary greatly depending on the time frame of the goal and the level of interest in the task (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009).

Furthermore, 53,5 % of the alumni from the second survey agreed that it is of great importance that the Scandinavian Department offers mobility scholarships for studying Norwegian abroad or in other words it gives them several opportunities of internalization abroad, including Erasmus and EEA scholarships, summer courses at University of Oslo, Bergen, Agder and other (Tomescu Baciú et al., *forthcoming*).

The third study is built upon the opinions of the BA students and alumni as regards their motivation to enrol for a full MA programme that is conducted fully in Norwegian at BBU. The survey indicates that 90% of the respondents, after graduating the BA programme in Norwegian are interested in choosing a MA programme in the same field because, first of all, it offers them better career perspectives (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020). In addition, from a total of 147 respondents, 30 references were related to work mainly in education and research, while 15 references were connected to IT and other 11 references to translation and proofreading jobs. This indicates that our students want to continue their studies in the same field in order to deepen their academic knowledge in Norwegian.

### **Job opportunities and satisfaction with the learning outcomes**

Employment is an important dimension in the analysis of student and alumni satisfaction, and, at the moment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> study was conducted, 87% of the alumni who participated were employed (Tomescu Baciuc et. al, 2020), namely 107 out of 123 respondents. A total of 82 employed alumni (i.e. 77% of them) continued their education, choosing either new BA programmes, or continuing with MA and PhD programmes. Only 2 of the 16 alumni who were not employed have not been enrolled in a study programme, revealing that the large majority of the unemployed graduates were continuing their education; it can thus be concluded, from the answers provided by the respondents, that the main cause for their unemployment would be their student status, being enrolled in BA, MA or PhD studies.

As we go further deep into the analysis of the answers related to employment and career provided by the alumni who are employed versus those unemployed, it can be noticed that more than half of the employed alumni (54%) declare that their current jobs are related to the skills provided by the BA programme in Norwegian. Moreover, 32 out of 107 declare themselves very satisfied with the career path they have chosen, 55 are generally satisfied, whereas 6 are generally dissatisfied and 6 were neutral, showing that 81% of the employed graduates are very satisfied and generally satisfied with their career path, as compared to the overall answers provided by both employed and unemployed alumni, which revealed the satisfaction of 78.9% of the graduates (Tomescu Baciuc et. al., forthcoming). A number of 6 of the 17 unemployed graduates expressed their general satisfaction towards their career paths, 4 of them confessed to be very satisfied, while 3 were neutral, 2 were generally dissatisfied, and only one was very dissatisfied.

In the framework of the first two studies, the latest article gathered information from BA as well as alumni in order to investigate the interest in designing a Master's programme in Norwegian as a link between the already existing BA and PhD Norwegian studies (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020). The questionnaire, addressed to both BA students and alumni, took into consideration same items as student progression, success, students' satisfaction, career paths of graduated in accordance with job opportunities. Additional performance items were identified and interpreted from the open questions of the survey regarding the Norwegian programme: the unicity and the prestige of the Norwegian programme at national level (items also evaluated in the previous two articles).

Out of a total of 147 respondents, 95.2% – alumni and registered students – would be interested in enrolling for a pilot MA programme of Norwegian literary and non-literary translations as suggested in the items of the enquiry and based on the students' satisfaction with the Norwegian studies at BBU (offering literary translation courses at BA and MA level, literary translation seminars with NORLA). With regard to the respondents' careers and job opportunities, the large majority (90%) considers the MA programme in Norwegian as important for their professional needs (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020). According to the findings of the research, the top five MA disciplines/academic skills preferred by the respondents were:

studying the Norwegian language (85%), engage in fictional literary translations (76.9%), collaboration with publishing houses and cultural entities from Romania and from Norway which promote literary translations (74.2%), engage in non-fictional literary translations (72.8%), and organizing sessions and workshops on literary translations in collaboration with publishing houses (62.6%). (Tomescu Baciuc et al., 2020, p. 24).

In collaboration with NORLA, the Norwegian programme organized several events and literary translation seminars throughout its existence.

If we are to analyse the data gathered, we observe that the desire to follow a master's programme was stronger in the last survey. The difference could be the fact that in the first survey the respondents were primarily students enrolled in the first or second year that had not thought about their opportunities after graduation, while in the last survey the respondents were mostly alumni, already enrolled in a master's programme or working in the field. Consequently, the third article in the series, discussing a pilot MA programme in literary and non-literary translations determined that the MA

programme should necessarily comprise both fundamental and specialized knowledge in Norwegian language, literature and the field of fictional and non-fictional translations.

### **Limitations and further considerations**

In interpreting the data gathered, the research team was aware of the limitations connected to the objectivity of the responses due to the participants' intention to please the researcher or to the risks of miscommunication as concerns answering to the open-ended questions (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2009). Secondly, the authors of this study are also teachers at the Scandinavian department and the project research conducted by them intended to enhance the quality assurance of the Norwegian language and literary programme by offering both an internal (for the department) and an external analysis (for ARACIS). In correlation with the quality assurance standards and guidelines for the European higher education systems, the three studies conducted by this team have involved the main stakeholders in the learning process, namely the students and the staff.

Another research conducted by an international research team at BBU has focused on how students' language skills in Norwegian can provide opportunities for different kinds of language-related careers in the labour market (Bjerge, Tomescu Baciú & Whittaker, 2020). Having as a starting point this empirical research, it would be beneficial to conduct a new research in order to identify and extend the institutional relationship between BBU and employers in Romania that offer job opportunities to students that have a bachelor degree in Norwegian. Thus, it is recommended to ask for feedback from the external actors as well, such as employers and other institutional partners, especially as stakeholders may have different purposes and priorities, and, hence, different perspectives on higher education and quality assurance (ESG, 2015, p. 7).

Whether the research we performed might be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest because we are both researchers and teachers at the Scandinavian department, the motivation behind it was to fulfill the quality assurance guidelines referred to in this paper, according to which both students and teachers are required to evaluate their academic programme, in order to improve its input and output. In the course of time the programme has regularly been evaluated externally by ARACIS, and the latest evaluation data from March 2020 is due to be made public.

## Conclusions

An analysis of the three research studies revealed that extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors have determined students to enrol in the BA programme in Norwegian and that the gradual increase in their number is connected both to their academic and their job opportunities after graduation. Findings indicate an almost unanimous positive opinion regarding the implementation of a master programme in Norwegian as a link between the existing BA programme and the PhD Norwegian studies. The data gathered underlined the complexity of the studies, the need to cover both practical and theoretical aspects and the importance of translations in the process of acquiring skills and competences to meet the demands of the labour market.

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# An ESP Perspective on the Fashion Discourse. Classroom Applicability

ANDA-ELENA CREȚIU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** The present study focuses on some particularities of the discourse of fashion as to its microstructure level, especially. The research of a corpus of 32 different texts included in ten specialized fashion magazines published this year is meant to reveal certain peculiarities of the discourse used by this community. The interest lies in the level of the specific lexis mainly and the way it determines some morpho-syntax, semantics, and rhetorical features, with an attempt to distinguish possible established discourse structures. Another point of interest is that of establishing certain similarities and differences between this kind of discourse and that of art, in general, to facilitate a better understanding of the communicative needs of the respective students. A final comparison of the cumulative findings to 20 texts written by the 2020 graduates of Fashion Design (designer concept statements) is meant to inspire a more effective approach to the teaching of specialized English to this group of students, in view of their future professional communicative purposes.

**Keywords:** *Applied Discourse Analysis, ESP, Fashion.*

## Premises

Over the last decades, the dynamics of specialized language(s) and the corresponding studies have met with amazing growth, worldwide. With English as a *lingua franca*, several fields have already established themselves as classical, such as Business English (which has diversified into subfields such as English for Business Communication, English for Academic and Occupational Business Purposes, English for Management, Economics, Marketing, etc.), English for Tourism, Medical English, English for Engineers, Legal English, English for Science and Technology, etc.

Such a large sub-disciplinary variation has raised many challenges for those teaching the respective branch-related languages, as to the designing, implementing, and teaching the courses. Involved in an extensive three-year

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study of possible variations across what is usually referred to as Business English, based on the textual and communicative problems both students and teachers experienced, Bhatia mentions that “the textual and academic performance perspectives clearly showed that although there were some common features that formed an academic core in the business discourse, there were nonetheless distinctive generic characteristics, which were reflective of the requirements of the different sub-disciplines in BBA programs”. Therefore, he continues,

The research findings clearly supported the view that EBP [English for Business Purposes] needs to develop a discourse-and-genre-based cross-disciplinary approach, taking into account the dynamic aspects of disciplinary tensions, to create appropriate conditions for meeting the inter-disciplinary discourse-based demands placed on new students in the academy and to meet the business community needs for multidisciplinary communicative expertise. (Bhatia, 2012, p. 13)

There is also the problem of establishing the right relation between teaching the specific language in class and the real-life experience of using the language in the respective professional field. If the core coordinates of the larger field of ESP have not changed drastically since 1997, when Dudley-Evans described it in terms of absolute<sup>2</sup> and variable characteristics<sup>3</sup> (p. 6, and 1998, pp. 4-5), and the role of the ESP practitioner schematically remained quite the same as described by the same author, that of a teacher, collaborator, course designer and materials provider, researcher and evaluator, what keeps evolving and continually changing is the reality or, the context of the field the specific language is used for or, into. As a consequence, it is only natural that the ESP practitioner (teacher) needs to keep in permanent touch with the respective reality, research it, adapt to it, try to find the best and the most effective ways in which to implement the findings to the final goal: that of providing the students with the most accurate tools to cope with the requirements of the fields they will be functioning in later on.

There are several debates on the subject of the specificity. Ken Hyland (2002, pp. 385-395) suggests that “ESP must involve teaching the literacy skills which are appropriate to the purposes and understandings of particular

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<sup>2</sup> 1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners; 2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; 3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

<sup>3</sup> 1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; 2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English; 3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level 4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. 5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

academic and professional communities” and advocates for “the need to reaffirm our commitment to research-based language education”, as well as for narrowing the angle, that is, the specificity. The same author (2006, p. 3) insists that “There is now compelling evidence across the academic spectrum that disciplines present characteristic and changing forms of communication which students must learn to master to succeed”. In this respect, the use of specific corpora within the ESP academic courses has been proved to contribute to better results in students preparing for their future careers (Haile, 2015, p. 119).

Other researchers (Huckin, 2003, pp. 6-10) believe that the angle should be broader, less centered on the teacher, and more in view with the student. It is the student’s role to give that specificity to the ESP class, while the teacher should function as a facilitator who provides the students with the right textual and rhetorical instruments. Huckin (2003, pp. 12-13) also raises an important aspect of ESP research: its relevance. He speaks about local and published research. The local one is conducted by the teacher to get all the necessary information to exploit in the ESP class for the benefit of the students, as part of a needs analysis. It is relevant for that context and the needs and goals of the specific group of students, thus not having a general relevance. The published research in the ESP field has an “odd” role:

On the one hand, it typically represents careful, scholarly investigation of a particular aspect of special purpose language use. On the other hand, the findings of such research are seldom generalizable to teaching situations beyond the one that inspired the research. Indeed, the very specificity of good local research weighs against its likelihood of being relevant to other contexts. [...] LSP teachers should be reading up on the literature to get general ideas about how best to coach their students. Not specific details to be transmitted in traditional top-down fashion, but general strategies to guide both the teacher’s and the student’s work. (Huckin, 2003, pp. 12-13)

The approaches to ESP theory and practice are also quite large in number, from classical morpho-semantics to discourse analysis (corpora-based, multimodal) and, more recently, genre-analysis. The latter appears to have spread throughout many academic contexts, whether as a continuation of the 1981 *Create a Research Space (CARS)* model<sup>4</sup> developed by John Swales for research article introductions, or as the Australian functional linguistic approach, and the American rhetorical approach. As Bhatia (2008, p. 10) notices, genre analysis may be viewed as

the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings. These are attempts to offer increasingly more

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<sup>4</sup> It comprises three rhetorical moves, namely, Move 1 (establish a research territory), Move 2 (establish a niche), and Move 3 (occupy the niche).

complex (“thicker”) descriptions of language use, incorporating, and often going beyond, the immediate context of a situation, taking analyses beyond mere linguistic descriptions to offer explanation for specific uses of language in conventionalized and institutionalized settings. As we can see, the most important feature of this approach in all three manifestations of genre theory is the emphasis on conventions. (Bhatia, 2008, p. 10)

Bhatia (2004) proposes an even “thicker” approach to genre, from a multiple perspective; this would lead to the construction of a “multidimensional three-space model for the analysis of discourse as genre integrating social professional space, social space and textual space.” This complex model would also benefit from an integration of different approaches to discourse analysis (ethnographic discourse analysis, concerned with the context, critical discourse analysis, corpus-based discourse analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis, where language is only one form of communication) into one framework. Critical discourse analysis focuses on the relationship between discourse, power, dominance, and social inequality, as reflected in a number of selected texts; the approach is not without criticism itself, sometimes accused of certain biases and a certain lack of objectivity. Mediated discourse analysis changes the focus from text to social action and aims to interpret and explain social problems. It views discourse practice as one single form of social manifestation, through which society creates institutions and power relations; as a method, it makes use of any tools made available by the other approaches.

ESP studies on English for Art Purposes (further referred to as Art English, as well) are scarce, even though some universities (in the U.K. and the U.S.A) offer students—non-native speakers, especially— such courses, mainly for preparing them for their future academic studies. As a fellow Art English teacher in Peru also notices:

A wealth of literature exists on the theories of English teaching, some of this material deals with EAP (business, law, engineering, etc.) but precious little is found on humanistic subjects and even less on art-related matters. This is mainly due to the fact that the nature of some technical subjects like Hotel Management for example, facilitates the compilation of a universally accepted terminology, which is easily adapted to course contents. The complexity of art-related subjects however would render such an approach unviable, further strengthening the need for the hypothesis of integration. (Warnken, 2011, p. 35)

The said teacher had struggled to find a solution for a methodology to teach an academic art English course to the Lima University students. He proposes a syllabus centered around such pillars as environmental matters, instating leadership, the specificity of English for Academic Purposes, English as a *lingua franca*, specific content (including here communication

technologies, the prevalence of graphic design, building up an art “grammar”), metaphor at the center of the language used for the arts, the promotion of peer learning. The main content topics of the syllabus proposed by this teacher concern The Gutenberg Revolution, The Rise of Photography, Expressionism of the XX century *avant-garde*, Punk and Postmodernity, Political Graphics, Saving the planet. He also proposes an “activity book” and an assessment model.

In just a paragraph or so, another Art English teacher from France (Richard, 2000, p. 34) pleads for the building up of a specific vocabulary, the correct pronunciation of names and terms, the use of “serious” texts (such as a Catholic encyclopedia) instead of “vulgarizing” journalistic texts.

It has been the purpose of the present author for almost three decades to study the specificity of the discourse related to the visual arts, to provide her students with the most effective tools to use the English language for their specific purposes, both in-training (academic), and as future artists, designers, art historians and critics, curators, etc.

## Field literature

Fashion has established itself as an important and extremely popular reality today, as a field overlapping visual arts and design. Many discussions have been about whether it should be considered a form of art (fine art), applied art, or a type of design. A lot of arguments and counterarguments (including those brought by the fashion students themselves) have bent the scale one direction or the other. It is not our purpose to adopt a point of view in this respect, but to distinguish how this field has already developed itself a specific kind of discourse, with its particularities.

Fashion could not exist without language; as Moeran (2004, p. 35) notices: “It is, indeed, the use of language that transforms clothing into fashion, in particular through its articulation of concepts of ‘taste’”, even if, just like in the visual arts, clothing (works of art) do possess that power to evoke responses in the viewers, apparently with no words necessary. Just like the discourse related to the visual arts, the one used in fashion (e.g. in fashion magazines) is directed both at the professionals of the field, and at the general public, although there are very few texts written by the fashion designers themselves.

Meanwhile, fashion has its own semiotic system, as Roland Barthes maintains. In his *The Fashion System* (*Système de la mode*, 1967), Barthes analyses the flowery, descriptive language in fashion magazines *Elle* and *Le Jardin des Modes*, instead of the images printed in such publications, stating that: “it is not the object but the name that creates desire; it is not the dream but the meaning that sells” (Barthes, 1990, p. XII). Therefore, it appears that

it is (also) the power of the fashion discourse that makes fashion so universally desirable. According to the same author, the purpose of the discourse of fashion is, on the one hand, to signify clothing (give it meaning), while, on the other, to throw a kind of veil on the consciousness of the buyer, so that s/he buys the fashion product, not as a necessity, but as a “fashion product”; the economic force of this discourse cannot, therefore, be neglected. A certain similarity between this process and that of buying art cannot be overlooked, even while another similarity may be noticed: the close connection between image/clothing and word/discourse. Barthes studies the process through which the *image-clothing* (*vêtement-image*) is translated into *written-clothing* (*vêtement écrit*); in his opinion, fashion as such would not, and cannot, exist unless it is first described.

Language constrains, while viewing is freer; language imposes a choice, depending on the way the speaker/writer looks at/views the image/object. But language also adds information about the image/object; it “opens the invisible”, it translates, interprets, evaluates the image/object, thus creating a whole out of fragmented perceptions. Barthes also distinguishes two types of utterances in the fashion discourse: one that describes forms, fabrics, colors, and so on, signifying clothing, the other that evaluates and offers the circumstances (e.g. evening, shopping), by which the world is signified. Fashion, as sign, is transmitted by the two.

A social anthropologist, Moeran (2004, p. 41) is rather interested in the way the cultural, ‘world’, or ‘lifestyle’ *signifieds* are reflected by the fashion discourse, as they relate to signifying aspects of garments (color, detail, fabric and so on) portrayed and described in contemporary Japanese fashion magazines, whose editors construct a “discourse of taste”.

In other articles, Moeran (2003, 2014) focuses on international fashion magazines, on the glossy magazines, whose purpose is to make proposals about what in particular makes the latest clothes ‘fashion’. He suggests that “there are key evaluative terms that constitute the discourse of fashion, and that these key concepts interact both with one another within a single field and across different evaluative fields (such as art and aesthetics, sports, music, and wine) (Moeran, 2014, p. 141). Another project by the same author is based on 40 interviews taken of fashion magazine publishers to examine

the intricate relationships that are continuously being negotiated between fashion magazine staff, the advertisers upon whose budgets they rely, the fashion world of which they form a part and with which they interact regularly, and their readers. I will focus in particular on the different kinds of readers magazines address and analyze the latter’s position in the world of fashion in the context of what has been written about art worlds. (Moeran, 2006, p. 725)

## Method

Previous studies of the specific discourse of the visual arts have combined well established ESP methods to distinguish the particularities of the field, at both a micro- and a macro levels, starting from the specific vocabulary, morpho-syntax, semantics, and rhetoric to the various domain-specific genres. There are, however, certain particularities which differ among the various subfields of the visual arts. It is the purpose of the present study to distinguish the particularities of the fashion discourse.

The present approach is a “patched” one (see Gee, 1999, p. 5; Bhatia, 2008, p. 15<sup>5</sup>), since this method seems more productive for gathering relevant information and for interpreting it. The method is also, partially, a *corpus-supported*, or, rather, *corpus-driven* discourse analysis (Lee, 2008, pp. 99-100). Therefore, relevant corpora available online (not necessarily very large ones) consisting of 52 texts specific to the fashion field have been considered. Out of these, 32 texts belong in important fashion magazines (such as *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Elle*, *Dior*, *In Style*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, or in large-audience newspapers and magazines with in-built fashion columns (*The Guardian*, *Cosmopolitan*, *W Magazine*), and fashion blogs (<https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/magazine/fashion>), while 20 texts of various sizes and types were written by UAD<sup>6</sup> fashion students. However, they were not grouped by the genres they belong to but rather tend to be the most recent ones published by the respective sources. By using the AntConc 3.5.8. concordance mechanism applied to the two corpora (the fashion magazines’ texts and the students’) a bottom-up analysis was conducted, through which statistic data were gathered and interpreted to reach some theoretical conclusions about this type of discourse.

The main interest went into distinguishing the specific lexis, some “idioms”<sup>7</sup> pertaining to the fashion lexis, the most typical collocations, and the way they relate to the big themes of fashion, by way of “semantic preferences” and pragmatic meanings. Their use in the specified corpora has been compared and contrasted with the specific discourse of the visual arts, to distinguish both the similar and the different instances. After distinguishing the most important themes the fashion discourse has established, both a

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<sup>5</sup> *In one sense, although each individual approach provides a useful and credible view of the elephant, as we might say, none of them, on its own, can provide a full view of the elephant. This volume is an invitation to consider how these different approaches can be harnessed and integrated in order to have as comprehensive a view of the beast as is possible.*

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<sup>7</sup> Other terms used in Discourse Analysis Terms for this phenomenon: *fixed expressions* and *multi-word units*, *routine formulae*, *lexicalized stems*, *formulaic sequences*, *chunks*, and *lexical bundles*.



quantitative and qualitative analysis has been made of the different collocations pertaining to those themes.

Another aspect of this type of discourse should be taken into consideration as well: its multimodal character, quite similar to the discourse of visual arts, in general. It is necessary to consider its language in direct relationship with the image. More recent terminology in multimodal discourse analysis speaks about “visual collocations”, where the full meaning of the message is constructed by combining the different ways of expression. As Lynn Flowerdew notices, “there is now a ‘new modal order’ emerging in this era of digital literacies, specifically computer-mediated communication involving e-mail, discussion groups, Internet relay chats (IRC) and weblogs” (Flowerdew, 2012, p. 183). Fashion photography produces images; catwalk shows, Internet hosted fashion events, and publications, etc., are some contexts in which language is used to build a whole discourse of this field.

The way fashion students deal with such established “idioms” and /or language patterns in the fashion discourse throws some light on how, to what extent, they master the tools of the trade at the level of its discourse and onto some possible steps the ESP teacher should take to come to their help, including building what is now called “the new literacy” (see Gee, 2012, pp. 371-382). He maintains that

no one would say anyone could read a given text if he or she did not know what the text meant. But there are many different levels of meaning one can give to or take from any text, many different ways in which any text can be read (Gee, 2012, p. 373).

These steps also refer to the in-class use of specific corpora, relevant for the interest of the students of this sub-field.

## Findings and interpretations

At the foundation of the fashion discourse, just like in any other field, lies the specific lexis. Its words and phrases can be grouped into two main parts: descriptive and evaluative (better yet, rather descriptive and rather evaluative, since there are many cases of evaluative descriptions). This aspect is very similar to the same feature of art lexis, where besides evaluative terms, there are also interpretive ones. Moeran (2004, p. 10) considers evaluative terms real fashion keywords, “because they are imbued with multiple condensed meanings, while at the same time being lexically and syntactically predictable”. Indeed, people, specialists of the field or not, tend to associate *silk*, for example, with *soft*, *satin* with *sleek*, *look* with *feminine*, etc. The same author distinguishes a number of evaluative techniques, all of them present in

the studied corpora: simply mentioning the qualities (*a high-quality material, an original design; Birkenstock's Arizona sandals were the hottest shoe in the world over the past quarter*); extensive use of similes and metaphors (*the loungewear feel of summer; your next virus-safe look; the rictus clench of a bag clamped under an armpit; Phlemuns' printed set are a quarantine dream*); repetition (of the same terms: *beautiful, beautiful little dress*; of different terms of the same type: *refined, chic, and feminine: the most perfect(!) and pithy*); contrast (*an easy-breezy, yet totally cute casual summer outfit*).

One purpose of the fashion discourse is to inform about the way a garment looks, about its perceived qualities. The descriptive part is specific to clothing: e.g. a fabric can be *silky, lace-edged, glossy*. When evaluated, it can be *comfortable, cozy, miracle*. A skirt can be described as *slitted (!), voluminous, billowy*, and evaluated as *dramatic*.

There are certain words that describe features of clothes, techniques, etc., which are specific to the branch and are not to be found outside of it (*a bias cut, a dirndl, paisley pattern*), while other may belong either in the general lexis, or in other fields, but receive new meanings related to fashion when employed by it (e.g. a *balloon* sleeve or skirt, a *puff* sleeve, a *bucket* hat). A lexical feature that is very similar to the art discourse is the use of **long chains of lexical items to describe and to evaluate**; apparently, in fashion they are even longer, forming clusters:

- icy and fresh, this zesty look will add a hint of flavor to your favorite white T-shirt.
- not the dinky fussy teeny-tiny type of bag.
- H&M's puff-sleeved fuchsia pink mini dress.
- feathered-sleeved mini dress.
- shirt dress with lace-up rattan wedges.
- navy silk long-sleeve maxi dress.
- a beautiful, beautiful little dress.
- delicate dress made of Chantilly lace.
- The collection is androgynous, oversized, torn jeans, plaid and camouflage prints, dirty denim, black, grey, army green.
- Speedo- the single most perfect and pithy item of clothing ever designed for the male body.
- I just threw this on look.
- an easy-breezy, yet totally cute casual summer outfit.

The use of some **specific collocations** (fixed semantic structures; predictable semantic associations) as part of the restricted fashion code indicate membership of the field (or not); The components of a collocation gather around the key word and may consist of descriptive, evaluative, or both types terms:

- Silhouette + compact/flowing/classic/modern/relaxed/casual
- Season + summer/autumn/winter/fashion
- Outfit + white/athleisure/summer/trendy/romantic + color + style + trend //bodysuit/super-cute
- Color + descriptive-evaluative = vibrant/matching/ all-white black
- Runway + show/s
- Trendy + outfit //mix of ~ and classic
- Comfy + item + ~ and casual
- Matching + item/ color/ texture / accessories/
- Exclusive + look/ item
- Chic + item / chains with other evaluative terms = comfortable/cute + style = retro beach chic + determinatives = elegantly chic / festival chic + opposing terms casual yet so chic + time = classic 50's chic
- Look + style = everyday/laid-back/ casual/ trendy/new/ classic/ romantic/ modern
- Classic + item = ballgown /raincoat/taffeta trench/ tweed jackets + opposing term = more classic and much less trend-focused/ progressive, yet classic + design + style = classic casual; + time = classic 50's chic
- Elegant + item + other positively evaluative term = elegant, beautiful, flattering/ elegant and feminine + determinative = a bit elegant + opposing terms = unusual but also elegant/ simple, yet elegant and feminine/ elegant but bold
- Feminine + determinative = unmistakably ~ + look + side (+ word=noun phrase) + opposing terms = feminine without being too girly + other evaluative terms = elegant and feminine/ elegant and understated
- Color + other elements = textures + (evaluative) determinatives = primary = (multiple) bright = (rocking) bold = unusual = rocking bold= vibrant = matching = two-tone + scheme (color scheme) + vb. = mix
- Dress + determinatives (evaluative) = spectacular = versatile

The discourse of fashion has been structured around eight key elements (viewpoints may differ as to the number). One way or another, whenever one writes/speaks about fashion, one has to mention at least some

of them. Below are eight tables, each gathering the terminology related to such a key term; their use was compared as to the occurring frequencies in the A corpora (the fashion magazines texts) and B corpora (the fashion students' texts) and some relevant examples were selected in both cases.

## 1. SILHOUETTE

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
silhouette (shape/ lines)	7	2	A classic midcentury/ a modern/ long/ relaxed/ casual silhouette	I will keep the straight lines of the classic male costume
A-line	2	-	Its generous A-line volume	-
bell	1	-	something more fitted with a bell bottom	-
volume	2	2	a small amount of breeze volume skirt/ its generous A-line volume	passing through volume, asym- metry, geometry/ using volume, overlay to give a fancy note
asymmetry/ ical	1		massive asymmetrical nightgown	see above
neckline/neck	7	-	the strapless neckline/ The gold dress, the neckline, and the blond hair/ Sweetheart neck/ High neck/ Funnel neck	-
sleeve(s)	8	2	H&M's puff-sleeve... mini dress/navy silk long sleeve maxi dress/ a white or black short- sleeve shirt/ ruched sleeves/ off-the-shoulder sleeves/ long sleeves/ adjustable hood and sleeves	atop that has these oversized sleeves/ puffed, Victorian sleeves are back in the game

## 2. ITEM

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
Item/s	5	2	my favorite item-clothing/ no item in the male wardrobe is so exposing/ the single most perfect and pithy item of clothing/ this item quickly becomes office-appropriate	utilitarian item tike these/ in the reasonable items of the design
mask	17	-	face mask/scarf and mask combo/ ditsy printed face mask/ the royal styled her face mask with belted shirtdresses/ DIY face mask/mask of choice	-
bralette	2	-	this Season's Must-Have: The Bralette/ designed to be worn with a cami(sole), a bralette...	-
Speedos/ speedos	13	-	the comeback of skimpy speedos/men in Speedos/ more freedom with Speedos	-
pants	4	-	a breezy pair of pants/pants come with zips at the calf/leather pants	-
skirt/s	11	1	a tennis skirt and sneakers for a cute preppy look/ ... and billowy skirt below/ voluminous/ slitted skirt/ the dramatic skirt, the vibrant color/ we wear our skirts and shorts with black opaque tights/miniskirts/pair well with slacks, skirts or leather pants	her casual designs and shorter skirts
blouse	1	-	pair a polka dot blouse with ripped black jeans	-
jacket	14	-	Leather/ PVC/ yellow denim jacket/ bow closure jacket/ canopy parachute jacket <i>Short Athelta</i>	-

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
dress/es	46	11	lace dress/sleek slip/ navy/ dungaree dress/ beautiful, beautiful dress/navy silk long-sleeve maxi dress/ cut-out dress/ H&M's puff-sleeve fuchsia pink midi dress/ floral dress/tea/ cocktail dress/ princess dress/Angelina-Jolie-pleated dress/ feathered-sleeved mini dress/ delicate dress made of Chantilly lace/ dress of the season/ Valentino/ Prada dress/ the perfect little dress that makes you feel like a million/ gold/ short/ little purple dress/ there's a current fashion trend for <b>pinafiores and dungaree dresses</b>	a chic ensemble ... a girly dress mixed with combat boots/ little dark dress showed up right in time/ Furstenburg's pullover wrap dress/ these dresses are spectacular/ these dresses are very/ extremely versatile/ the length of the dresses/ the sketches of the dresses
bodysuit	15	-	futuristic bodysuit/bodysuit and shorts/ bodysuit outfit/ wear your bodysuit like a shirt/pair a bodysuit with classic joggers/ if you think bodysuit you think dainty and graceful, think again/ the statement metallic bodysuit	
swimsuit/ swim brief	2	-	the nylon swimsuit/ the swim brief was the choice of...	
statement piece	2	1	make it a statement piece (your bodysuit)/ depending on your mood, bodysuits can either be the foundation of your outfit or the statement piece	... I think fashion in 2020 is all about making a statement and sustainability and reducing textile pollution

### 3. FABRIC

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
fabric/s	13	4	GoreTex fabric/ silky fabric/ easy and comfortable/ miracle/ glossy/ cozy/ performance/ thin fabric/ using leftover fabrics	fabric is the most important factor of a product/ I use holographic fabric materials/ the possibilities of fabrics and patterns/ for fabrics I invented an alphabet from dots and lines
cotton	5	1	ditsy cotton floral/cotton shirt/ Yeezy cotton trousers/ flimsy cotton vests	there are different types of materials: cotton, sponge cloth, plastic, veil...
silk	4	1	silk dresses/ lining/ long-sleeve maxi dress/she wore a white silk midi	the materialities (!) will be composed of soft and wavy texture of velvet and silk as in the Victorian era and Celtic period
denim	10	1	black denim cutoffs/ distressed/ double-denim/ denim jacket/ matching denim looks/ denim pair/ denim shorts	camouflage prints, dirty denim...
gingham	1	-	Gingham scarf and mask	-
lace	6	-	couture in satin and lace/ lace dress/ lace-edged/ Chantilly lace/ shirt dress with laced-up rattan wedges	-
leather	12	1	leather jacket/florals and leather are a popular combination in England/ a leather bootie/leather boots/ especially a leather jacket/navy leather one/ leather pants/ brown leather slides	the use of leather and classic structure with a futuristic twist of my collection
suede	1	-	I have two favorites: a very sophisticated red suede pair and some faux sheepskin mitten	-
velvet	-	1	-	by soft and wavy texture of velvet and silk as in the Victorian era and Celtic period

## 4. DETAIL

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
details	2	7	Have drawstring details and secure closures	...their details: lines, prints, cords, collars, and pockets/ much details (!)/ details make the dresses extremely versatile/ abundance of the precious details of the Baroque/ details which change the role/ industrial details
line/s	1	7	lines always look more chic	lines, prints, cords.../ making lines and circles/ endless lines/ lines and dots
cut	4	1	the cut on your hips/ it's about fit and cut	I burned, cut, sewed the materials
design	12	6	a design classic; this design... even more meaningful/ red off-the-shoulder design	changed their design through staples
designed	11	-	designed a six-piece men's capsule collection/ as a purely functional object/ by.../ for practicality/ for the male body/ for women who embrace their femininity/ to be worn with ...	-
pattern/s	6	4	the pattern of her mask/ we mix prints, patterns and styles/ there are so many patterns and styles for leggings/mix and match unexpected patterns and textures/ the pair don't work from pre-existing garments or patterns	I started with the pattern/ I realized the pattern and then I printed/ ancient Celtic patterns/ the fabrics and patterns
motif/s	3	-	the deer motif/ the animal has been a long-standing motif of the British label creative director/ (Baudelaire) inspired the motifs of an emblematic piece in the autumn-winter 2010-2021 haute couture collection...	-
print/s/ printed	22	14	paisley-print/ bandana/ cheetah print/ pair two loud-print pieces together/ this one being a print, instead of an intarsia knit/ prints are cheerful/ from pastels to prints/ bright shades and prints/ ditsy-printed/ printed leggings/ Phlemuns' printed set are a quarantine dream/ floral-printed shirt dress	camouflage prints/ suitable print/ highlighted by a print/ digital print/ colors and prints are inspired/ prints are my favorites/ the dress prints/ saturated prints/ prints to be colored/ the pattern will be printed

## 5. COLOR

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
color/s/ed	17	8	the color and structure were so unusual/ don't shy away from color/ vibrant color/ matching the color scheme/ the all-white color/ add some color to your rainy day/ the gorgeous two-tone colors/ mixing different colors and textures/ rocking bold colors from head to toe/ basic colors/ bold primary colors/ don't be afraid to mix multiple bright colors together/ colored accessories	Color accents/ dominated by color/ the black color/ structures, colors, and prints/ pastel colors/ several colors/ I chose the prints to be colored
tone/s	3	-	two-tone colors/ two-tone oversized trench/base your look around brown and white tones	-

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
red	47	2	44 x red carpet +/- statement color/ superpower/ a red off-the-shoulder design/ one red, one green/ a red suede pair	black, grey, army green, orange, and red/ the main symbol of the collection is a red flower
white	35	-	all/ white + top/ shirt/ T-shirt/ Speedo/ sneakers/ tie/ outfit/ + combinations/ white or gold/ white paired with green	-
black	23	4	3 x black and white/ black denim cutoffs/ all black/ ripped black jeans/ black opaque tights/ simple black tank/ wear bright tights instead of black/ black rain jackets/ raincoat with silver hardware/ short-sleeve shirt/ she opened the door to a decade of black-tie bumps (pregnancy clothes)	black, grey, army green, orange, and red/ my creations are black and silver/ the black color/ black tint
blue	18	-	blue belted dress/ blue floral number of .../ powder blue armor set/ blue tank (top)	-
pink	7	-	pink crop top/ romantic pink girly summer outfit/fuchsia pink mini dress/ whether you choose black, pink, or white for your entire outfit/ wore pink Ralph Lauren/ she wore enough pink tulle to get lost into the Grammys	-
green	6	1	forest-green Athleta/ green earrings/ accent the look by using neon green, lime, or pale-yellow accessories/ a combination of white paired with green or yellow/ green pouch	black, grey, army green, orange, and red
yellow	6	-	pale-yellow/ green and yellow/ yellow denim jacket/ a bright yellow style	-
grey	2	1	grey rainy day/ last winter's grey wooly headband	black, grey, army green, orange, and red
orange	-	1	-	black, grey, army green, orange, and red
bright	9	-	bright + colors/ lilac sweater/ or patterned/ shades or prints/ tights/ anything bright or patterned yellow	-
dark	-	1	-	dark dress

## 6. ACCESSORY/IES

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
accessory/ ies	15	1	autumn clothes and accessories/shoes and accessories/ face-mask matching accessories-hats, scrunchies/ find some cool accessories/ add eye-catching accessories/ day-wear accessories, like a bucket hat, fun sunglasses or layered necklace/ pale-yellow colored accessories/key/ unique accessories to tie the look together/ adding a scarf and vintage accessories to your look is a fun way to experiment	one cute accessory everybody heard about – the bucket hat
bag/s	15	1	the terra-cotta Triomphe bag by Celine/ tote bag/ pink mini bag/ hands-free bag wearing is more modern	she makes installations from sleeping bags, tents ...
boots	10	1	unisex combat boots are on the rise/cowboy boots/rain boots/leather boots with a lace dress/ tights and boots/ Alexander McQueen's Tread Slick boots	girly dress mixed with combat boots

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
sandals	8	-	Chunky platform sandals/ sandals by Valentino/ lace up sandals/ brown sandals/ Birkenstock's Arizona sandals	-
jewelry	6	-	she kept her jewelry minimal/ minimal jewelry/ a lot of statement jewelry/ antique jewelry/ delicate/ gold jewelry	-
necklace	5	-	V-shaped necklace/ layered necklace/ a simple chain necklace to match	-
bracelet	1	-	studded bracelet with a prom dress	-

## 7. TASTE

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
sense	6	-	sense of home, sense of style	-
feel	18	-	my coats feel a bit more snuggly/ it might feel a little extra to have a gingham scarf and mask/ a real festival feel/ the perfect little dress that makes you feel like a million bucks/ the effortless feel of it/ to make comfortable dressing feel retro beach-chic/ a "thrown-on" feel/ will give the finished look a more laid-back feel	-
mood	1	-	depending on your mood, bodysuits can either be ...	-

## 8. LOOK

WORD/ PHRASE	FRE- QUENCY		EXAMPLES A	EXAMPLES B
	A	B		
look	94	8	make the look more casual/ more chic/ interesting/ deservedly lauded look/ this look was boldly eye-catching/ the very best of the period/ feminine/ zesty/ summer/ dramatic/ white T-shirt and jeans/ iconic/ head-to-toe designer/ promo/ runway/ an understated/ fresh/ gamine/ "I just threw thin on" + look/ the fur stole really made the look/ cool Californian laid-back look/ monochrome/ finished look/ some fun texture to break up the look/ your next virus-safe look (!!)	Dramatic look/ flawless look/ look real/ youthful brave look/ fashion look
style	117	5	bright-yellow style, a sense of style/ the GQ style/ French girl style/ too American in style/ personal/ Gerber's + style/ the 7 style rules/ the hot off-duty/ Nike/ comfort first/ eccentric/ sustainable/ archetypal British + style/ trends come back into style/ combination of style and substance/ impeccable/ street + style	Victorian style/ amazing case of style/ my style is a mix/ this style keeps coming back/ a fresh way to style your ensemble
accent/s	1	1	accent the look by adding neon green	give color accents
glamour	28	-	glitz and glamour of gowns/ Hollywood/ urban/ epitomized glamour/ a new way of thinking about glamour + Glamour (magazine) x 23	-
feminine	4	1	unmistakably feminine/feminine look/style/ elegant and feminine without being girly	feminine stitching that conveys elegance
androgynous	-	1	-	this collection is androgynous, oversized



## Conclusions

There are several aspects these tables reveal, worth mentioning:

- even if not all the key terms were present in the students' texts, the use of those that were reveals the fact that fashion students try to appropriate the fashion discourse to prepare for their future careers; consequently, the recourse to specialized texts during the ESP class should be more than appropriate;
- one of the core dimensions of fashion is the seasonal aspect: there are two fashion seasons: spring-summer and autumn-winter; since the texts were related to the spring-summer season of 2020, it is only natural to distinguish here some basic particularities of the season: the appearance of the mask as a key item (or, at least as an important accessory), directly connected to the pandemic we are still experiencing; some other new appearances mentioned in the texts were *the bralette* (a new compound word, starting from brassiere + a French suffix, denoting a sort of mini top), *pinafors* and *dungaree dresses* which are the seasonal must-haves, while the classic Speedos seem to be the greeted seasonal comeback;
- the background research of the fashion lexis has revealed that it is simply enormous and new items and features are always to be expected to join in; some terms and features are "recycled" and receive new relevance; the ways all this terminology can be used, combined, changed, enriched, forgotten, or brought forward are so astoundingly creative, that it is safe to say that we are dealing with an ever-changing reality of the field, therefore, of its discourse;
- the specific lexis is also related to the two types/subfields of fashion: *haute-couture* and *ready-to-wear*; it is expected that a greater wealth of determinatives, metaphors, chains and clusters should appear in describing and evaluating such haute-couture pieces and collections displayed on a catwalk, in a fashion show;
- continuous, up-to-date research of the field literature is a must for the fashion professionals if they want to stay tuned to the latest trends, ideas, tendencies, etc. The English language plays the most important role in this never-ending enterprise.

As part of our postmodern society, fashion is, on the one hand, an important vector of pleasure and consumption, while, on the other, it is an important dimension defining a person in terms of his/her social identity and

status, the body, gender, and appearance or representation. Fashion literature mainly gathered around fashion magazines (many online these days) has built a global fashion discourse, which, despite some culture-specific particularities, is quite unitary, especially in terms of its descriptive-evaluative lexis, organized along some fixed coordinates. As Moeran (2004, p. 76) insightfully remarks, fashion has become a mass spectacle, its ‘superstar’ designers and models principal characters in the narratives of popular culture, but it has also attracted “equally frenzied interest from sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, cultural, social and economic historians, and historians”.

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# Developing Clinical Communication Skills in the EMP Class: Challenges and Strategies

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**Abstract.** Effective clinical communication is essential for successful patient management, but developing the underlying skills is a complex and demanding undertaking. Starting from the Speaking Assessment Criteria used in the Occupational English Test (OET), the paper focuses on the different components of clinical communication that are assessed in this test for healthcare professionals, with examples taken from sample tests and relevant teaching resources. It also presents various strategies that can be used to help medical students develop communication and interpersonal skills in the English for Medical Purposes (EMP) class, and some of the challenges faced in the process.

**Keywords:** *clinical communication, interpersonal skills, EMP, OET speaking sub-test.*

## Introduction

Among the challenges of teaching future medical professionals within the English for Medical Purposes (EMP) classes at Medical Schools, perhaps the greatest one concerns the development of effective clinical communication skills, as it involves numerous aspects and is dependent on various factors which are both subjective and sometimes influenced by the communicators' cultural awareness and background. To enhance our success in this respect, we considered developing our teaching awareness to the purpose of integrating into our practice some strategies identified by examining the contents, test information and test samples available on the Occupational English Test (OET) website (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org>).

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OET is the only international English language test created for healthcare professionals and is recognised in several countries as proof of English language proficiency by healthcare regulators (e.g. in the UK, the US, Ireland, Australia, Canada). The structure of the test is similar to that of other internationally recognised English tests. Thus, it covers the four language skills (Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking), but “with an emphasis on communication in a healthcare environment” (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/healthcare-professions/medicine>). What is particular about this test is that it targets healthcare professionals who seek to work in an English-speaking environment and therefore it reflects real workplace scenarios.

### OET Speaking sub-test

Although OET was developed for twelve healthcare professions, our research focuses only on one of them, OET for Medicine, and more precisely on the Speaking sub-test. This part of the test is taken individually (and is recorded), lasts for about 20 minutes and is based on role plays. After a short warm-up in which the test taker answers some questions about their professional background, there are two five-minute doctor-patient role plays in which the test taker plays the part of the doctor, and the interlocutor plays the patient or the patient’s relative or carer. The role plays reflect typical workplace situations and are preceded by three-minute preparation time each.

Candidates receive role cards with information for the role plays, divided into the following sections:

- Setting (where the conversation is taking place) – this helps the candidate decide how to start the conversation;
- Scenario/background information – it gives essential details for completing the role play (e.g. the condition and purpose of the role play);
- Tasks – they are prompts of information to be discussed during the role play. (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/speaking/>)

Two trained OET assessors listen to the recording and grade the candidate (by assigning band scores) against nine assessment criteria, which are separated into Linguistic and Clinical Communication Criteria. The latter was introduced in September 2018 as a result of a need to assess, besides candidates’ linguistic skills, their ability to communicate in a medical context.

There are four Linguistic Criteria that are used in the assessment of candidates:

- **Intelligibility:** The impact of the candidate’s pronunciation, intonation and accent on how clearly the listener can hear and understand what they are saying

- **Fluency:** The impact of the speed and smoothness of the candidate's speech on their listener's understanding
- **Appropriateness of Language:** The impact of the candidate's language, tone and professionalism on their listener's understanding and comfort
- **Resources of Grammar and Expression:** The impact of the candidate's level of grammatical accuracy and vocabulary choices on their listener's understanding. (ibid.)
- Apart from these, there are five Clinical Communication Criteria:
- **Relationship-building:** The impact of the candidate's choice of opening to the conversation and demonstration of empathy and respect on their listener's comfort
- **Understanding and incorporating the patient's perspective:** The impact of how fully the candidate involves the patient in the conversation on their listener's understanding and comfort
- **Providing structure:** The impact of how the candidate organises the information they provide and introduces new topics for discussion on their listener's understanding
- **Information-gathering:** The impact of the type of questions the candidate asks and how they listen to the responses on their listener's understanding
- **Information-giving:** The impact of how the candidate provides information and checks that this information is being understood on their listener's comfort and understanding. (ibid.)

One can easily notice that each statement explaining the nine marking criteria focuses on the listener, which is essential for the candidate to consider, as nowadays healthcare is increasingly patient-centred.

In one of the videos posted on the Official OET YouTube channel, OET Expert Steve MacPhail gives tips on how to develop three essential speaking skills (in order to score high in the OET Speaking Sub-test):

- Information gathering (how a doctor asks questions to find out relevant information about the patient);
- Information giving (how a doctor gets the information through to the patient effectively);
- Showing empathy and reassuring the patient. (OET Speaking Preparation | With OET Online. Official OET. Apr 19, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKQnPLfCcZ4&t=456s>).

According to another OET expert, Rebecca Busch, some of the tips that can be useful when preparing for the speaking sub-test are:

- Imagining you are speaking to a real patient
- Putting yourself in the patient's shoes
- Reassuring the patient. (OET Speaking Sub-test Masterclass. Official OET. Nov 26, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0QsxwafmIs>)

She also emphasizes that the *choice of language* is one of the challenges that doctors face in their practice, as they need to adapt the language they use to communicate with the patient according to various criteria, among which: urgency (whether the case is an emergency or not), the patient's knowledge of the condition, whether they are speaking to the patient or a family member/carer, or the patient's age.

As Rebecca Busch points out, it is important to remember that the *stages* of a successful clinical communication include:

- understanding the patient's perspective
- using empathy to validate how the patient is feeling (and thus making them more receptive)
- giving clear and simple explanations, avoiding technical jargon (so as not to confuse the patient)
- checking for understanding and allowing the patient to ask questions or for clarification. (ibid.)

At the same time, as Busch mentions, *effective listening* to the patient is essential for the success of the communication. This involves:

- encouraging the patient to talk (by asking open questions) and to continue ('Right', 'OK', 'uh-huh')
- avoiding interrupting the patient
- providing an appropriate response (summarising what the patient has said/asking a follow-up question). (ibid.)

In order to exemplify several indicators of the Clinical Communication Criteria, we will analyse some excerpts from an educational test which was held in February 2019 in Melbourne, available on the official OET YouTube channel.<sup>6</sup> As examples, we chose mainly excerpts from the first role play, where the doctor is seeing a 45-year-old patient who suffered a mild heart attack two weeks before the consultation and is now concerned about the long term recovery. For the last section of indicators (E), we selected excerpts from the second role play, in which the patient is a boy who has recently been

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<sup>6</sup> OET Speaking Role Play (Medicine): First Role Play. Official OET, Jul 25, 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86XzmEjLZT4>

diagnosed with asthma, and the doctor is talking to the parent about the disease and the treatment. Both the sample role play cards<sup>7</sup>, and the transcript of the whole role play<sup>8</sup> can be found on the OET website. We will use the Speaking Assessment Criteria Glossary (from September 2018), section II (Clinical Communication Criteria), also available on the OET website,<sup>9</sup> in order to name the indicators for which we found examples in the chosen sample test. We selected below some excerpts from the candidate's contributions to the role play that show completion of the tasks, according to the indicators mentioned above. We chose only one or two of the indicators from the 3-5 ones listed under each category (A-E).

#### A. Indicators of relationship building

##### A1. Initiating the interaction appropriately

Candidate: [00:05:36] 'May I just confirm your name and date of birth please?' (<https://prod-wp-content.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2019/08/06105242/Branka-Transcript.pdf>)

This is the first question that the candidate asks, with the purpose of clarifying the patient's details at the beginning of the interview. This is an appropriate way to initiate the interaction with the patient when the doctor already has in front of her the patient's medical record.

##### A4. Showing empathy for feelings/predicament/emotional state

Candidate: [00:06:07] '[...] I understand that you have just been discharged from hospital two weeks ago. Is that correct? [...] That must be...very difficult for you.' (ibid.)

As the second question the candidate asks during the role play refers to a difficult experience the patient has had – that of having been hospitalized for the present condition –, it is important for the doctor (the candidate) to express verbal empathy for the patient's emotional state, thus making the patient at ease and gaining her trust. This needs to be covered in the first part of the interview, and the candidate does it successfully.

#### B. Indicators of understanding & incorporating the patient's perspective

##### B3. Relating explanations to elicited concerns

Candidate: [00:08:00] 'Sure, yeah, understandable. Well, in hospital they would have done all the necessary investigations to exclude any underlying

<sup>7</sup> <https://prod-wp-content.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2015/07/31235215/Speaking-Medicine-Sample-Test-1-2010.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://prod-wp-content.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2019/08/06105242/Branka-Transcript.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://prod-wp-content.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2018/07/02165707/speaking-checklist-glossary-updated-speaking-2018.pdf>



or unrecognized illness that would be contributed to your tiredness. So, let me reassure you that this is purely due to the normal bodily reactions once the body undergoes such an event as heart attack.’ (ibid.)

In this part of the role play, the candidate reassures the patient regarding one of her main concerns, namely her tiredness. She explains the source of this symptom as being a natural consequence of her heart attack and excludes other possible causes. Her explanations are clear and convincing and are also related to the patient management (the investigations) during her previous admission to hospital.

### C. Indicators of providing structure

#### C1. Sequencing the interview purposefully and logically

Interlocutor: [00:08:35] ‘Oh OK. So, this isn’t going to be like this forever?’

Candidate: [00:08:38] ‘Absolutely not. And that is why I would like to address something else with you that will help you with not feeling tired for a long time. It is called cardiac rehabilitation program. Have you heard about that?’ (ibid.)

Here the candidate introduces another topic in the discussion by relating the piece of medical advice she wants to give next to the concern that the patient has just expressed, that is her tiredness after the heart attack. Thus she smoothly makes the transition to the next part of the role play, in which she offers a solution to the problem the interlocutor (the patient) presented.

### D. Indicators for information gathering

#### D1. Facilitating the patient’s narrative with active listening techniques, minimising interruption

The candidate uses a lot of verbal encouragement: ‘Right’, ‘Sure’, ‘Uh huh’, ‘Yes, absolutely’, ‘Sure, yeah, understandable’. Also, she never interrupts the patient’s narrative. These are active listening techniques that the candidate uses successfully throughout the two role plays.

#### D2. Using initially open questions, appropriately moving to closed questions

Candidate: [00:06:07] ‘Can you tell me a little bit more about the treatment? I understand that you had a mild anterior acute myocardial infarction, and then it was treated in hospital.’ [...]

Candidate: [00:06:27] ‘Did you have any procedures? I’m trying to discern whether you had any surgeries, or you had...’ [...]

Candidate: [00:06:45] ‘Right. So, the tiredness began two weeks ago when you returned home from hospital, is that right?’ (ibid.)

In the first part of the interview, the candidate asks an appropriate open question about the treatment the patient received in hospital, in order to facilitate the patient narrative. Then she asks a closed question about medical procedures underwent in hospital, but expects the patient to develop her answer, so it can be considered a more focused open question. Finally, she addresses a closed question, well used for checking information about the onset of the present complaint (the tiredness). Thus, the candidate starts with an open question and moves appropriately to closed questions, as required.

#### E. Indicators for information giving

##### E1. Establishing initially what the patient already knows

Candidate: [00:12:37] ‘So did the doctors at the ED explain to you what asthma is, what medications treat asthma and how asthma should be monitored and treated?’ (ibid.)

In the second role play, the candidate checks what information the patient’s parent has already received when her 5-year-old child was diagnosed with asthma in hospital. She asks specific closed questions for this purpose (definition, medication, management), as she expects the patient to have already received certain information about her child’s condition. Moreover, she needs to know where to start the interview from.

##### E5. Discovering what further information the patient needs

Candidate: ‘Would you like to ask me a question at this point? Is there anything that I would... I can clarify for you or anything that you feel uncomfortable with in terms of Matthew's treatment?’ (ibid.)

At the end of the role play, the candidate asks the interlocutor (the carer) what other information she might need, thus preventing the omission of important details related to the patient’s condition or treatment. She also addresses the carer’s possible concerns related to her child’s treatment.

To conclude, by analysing the candidate’s performance during the sample speaking sub-test against the indicators in the Clinical Communication Criteria, we can ascertain that the candidate showed satisfactory patient communication skills. Our conclusion is in line with the feedback presented below.

The feedback for each test, posted beneath the video on the Official OET YouTube channel, is helpful as an example of how the Speaking Assessment Criteria are used in order to grade the candidate. Below is an example:

##### Feedback for Sample test 1:

The candidate’s pronunciation is easy to understand, and she has a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical expression used generally accurately to communicate appropriately. She speaks fluently with only natural hesitation.

She demonstrates mostly appropriate register, tone and lexis for the situation and the patient. She uses a mixture of medical and lay terms as necessary, but she should avoid using the medical term ‘anterior acute myocardial infarct’, rather than ‘heart attack’ with the patient. She clarifies the situation, reassures the patient and uses active listening and appropriate information-gathering techniques. She sequences the interview purposefully and logically. (OET Speaking Role Play (Medicine): First Role Play. Official OET, Jul 25, 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86XzmEjLZT4>)

The feedback refers to both sets of criteria, linguistic and clinical communication and summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate’s performance according to the indicators listed in the Speaking Assessment Criteria and Level Descriptors (<https://prod-wp-content.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2018/08/22102547/speaking-assessment-criteria-updated-2018.pdf>).

Sharing with students the indicators for meeting all these criteria, with examples either of sample OET Speaking sub-tests or of other relevant videos could be a good way to help them become aware of the skills they need to acquire or improve to be able to carry out successful doctor-patient interviews.

## Communication models

The *partnership model* is one of the communication models that improves patient care. The doctor and the patient are considered equal participants in the conversation, which becomes open and patient-centred. AIDET (developed by Studer group) is another increasingly popular communication tool, which is presented in the table below (reprinted by ACOG, 2014):

**Table 1.** AIDET® Five fundamentals of patient communication (Effective patient–physician communication. Committee Opinion No. 587. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). *Obstet Gynecol*, 2014, 123, p. 389–93. Retrieved Aug 24, 2020 at: <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/clinical/files/committee-opinion/articles/2014/02/effective-patient-physician-communication.pdf>)

AIDET® Five Fundamentals of Patient Communication	
<b>Acknowledge</b>	Being attentive and greeting the patient in a positive manner
<b>Introduce</b>	Giving your name, your role, and your skill set
<b>Duration</b>	Giving a reasonable time expectation
<b>Explanation</b>	Making sure the patient is knowledgeable and informed
<b>Thank you</b>	Showing appreciation to the patient for her cooperation

The RESPECT model shown below (also reprinted by ACOG, 2014) is used to increase doctors’ awareness of their cultural biases and to develop their rapport with patients from different cultural background.

**Table 2.** *The RESPECT model of patient communication (Effective patient–physician communication. Committee Opinion No. 587. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Obstet Gynecol, 2014, 123, p. 389–93. Retrieved Aug 24, 2020 at: <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/clinical/files/committee-opinion/articles/2014/02/effective-patient-physician-communication.pdf>)*

The RESPECT Model					
<b>Rapport</b>	Connect on a social level.	See the patient's point of view.	Consciously attempt to suspend judgement.	Recognize and avoid making assumptions.	
<b>Empathy</b>	Remember that the patient has come to you for help.	Seek out and understand the patient's rationale for her behaviours or illness.	Verbally acknowledge and legitimize the patient's feelings.		
<b>Support</b>	Ask about and try to understand barriers to care and compliance.	Help the patient overcome barriers.	Involve family members if appropriate.	Reassure the patient you are and will be available to help.	
<b>Partnership</b>	Be flexible with regard to issues of control.	Negotiate roles when necessary.	Stress that you will be working together to address medical problems.		
<b>Explanations</b>	Check often for understanding.	Use verbal clarification techniques.			
<b>Cultural Competence</b>	Respect the patient and her culture and beliefs.	Understand that the patient's view of you may be defined by ethnic or cultural stereotypes.	Be aware of your own biases and preconceptions.	Know your limitations in addressing medical issues across cultures.	Understand your personal style and recognize when it may not be working with a given patient.
<b>Trust</b>	Self-disclosure may be an issue for some patients who are not accustomed to Western medical approaches.	Take the necessary time and consciously work to establish trust.			

It is without doubt that the cultural competence is the most difficult to gain, but raising awareness in this field is perhaps the most important stage in

developing the skill, which has become increasingly important in our globalized world.

In conclusion, the first step in training students to become good communicators with their future patients would be to raise their awareness of the current communication models and give them the opportunity to apply these models. This can be done initially by the means of simulation activities during the EMP class, but also within the medical communication classes they have at university.

### Sample strategies and activities

Doctors need to have an effective questioning technique for a successful patient interview. A good way to start building this technique is by practising some typical questions to be asked at different stages of the interview, starting with greeting the patient and asking about the presenting complaint, going through description of pain and so on.

For example, there are typical questions to ask the patient for an accurate and complete description of pain. The question framework includes duration, site, character, time, severity, cause, radiation and relief. Students can be taught a mnemonic to make sure they remember all these stages of asking about the pain. SOCRATES is the acronym mnemonic frequently used by health professionals for pain assessment. Students can be asked to guess what word each letter stands for, with the help of some typical questions a doctor would ask in each case, if they need clues.

### Pain Assessment - SOCRATES

- **S**ite – Where is the pain?
- **O**nset – When did it start? How long ago?
- **C**haracter – Description – aching? stabbing? burning?
- **R**adiation – Where does it go?
- **A**ssociations – Impact on QOL – social, emotional, family, financial
- **T**ime course – Does the pain follow a pattern?
- **E**xacerbating/Relieving factors - Does anything change the pain? Current medications/interventions including complimentary – are they effective?
- **S**everity – Score – how bad is the pain?

*Fig. 1. SOCRATES mnemonic for pain assessment (<https://paramedicinecommunication.wordpress.com/6-interviewing-skills-and-building-therapeutic-relationships/>)*

A commonly used activity for practising asking questions in a patient interview, and which can probably be found in all medical English textbooks, is to provide the patient's answers in a short doctor-patient dialogue. Based

on those answers, students need to supply the questions that a doctor might ask. The following example is adapted from a task in Milner's textbook *English for Health Sciences*:

*Write the doctor's questions and complete the patient's answers in the dialogue. Then practice the interview with a partner.*

Doctor: So, how can I help you?

Patient: I have a really bad .....

Doctor: .....

Patient: No, it's only in my .....

Doctor: .....

Patient: It started about .....

Doctor: .....

Patient: No, some days it's .....

Doctor: .....

Patient: Yes, sometimes I get ..... as well.

Doctor: .....

Patient: No, I have never had a(n)..... like this before. (adapted from Milner, 2006, p.5)

Originally, the patient's answers are provided in full. However, giving students the opportunity to change these answers in each role play would make the task more challenging for the students, and thus both more appealing for them and more effective.

Similar gapped dialogues in which the doctor's questions need to be supplied in order to complete a history-taking speaking activity can be found in a valuable resource for learning medical English, the book *Professional English in Use, Medicine* – tasks 47.2 and 48.2 (Glendinning & Howard, 2007, p. 103, 105).

After students have been given all the necessary input and have practiced asking questions in simple role play exchanges, a more complex role play activity can follow. For example, they may be given small cards summarizing patient information (name, occupation, age, medication, present complaint, other symptoms, social history), and they need to use that information to take the medical history of the patients, at the same time turning the technical terms into language that the patient would understand. Examples of such speaking tasks can be found in the same textbook (Milner, 2006, p. 5, 9). A helpful resource for sample language specific to the different stages of the doctor-patient interaction, which can be used both in class and for future reference, is Unit VIII, 'The Medical History', from Ribes and Ros's book *Medical English* (2006).

The above are examples of activities used for building the verbal, task-based aspects of doctor-patient communication. If students' level of proficiency in English is high enough – that is at least B1 according to the

Common European Framework for languages – developing the verbal skills necessary for a medical interview should not pose problems. The challenge, for both teachers and students, resides in building the future doctors' interpersonal skills, as there are many aspects involved in this field, and some of them are more difficult to grasp.

Lawrence Dyche defines interpersonal skills as “the elements of communication which often carry the emotional content of the discourse”. It is not only what doctors say, but also “how, when and to whom they say it” that contributes to effective communication, which enables medical practitioners “to develop positive relationships with their patients”. (Dyche, 2007, p. 1035)

The latest acclaimed medical English textbooks place considerable emphasis on developing students' interpersonal skills, sometimes, it seems to us, even to the detriment of medical language learning. McCullagh and Wright's textbook *Good Practice, Communication Skills in English for the Medical Practitioner*, winner of the 2008 David Riley Award for Innovation in Business English and ESP, is centred around raising awareness of and acquiring such soft skills. Task sections such as ‘Conveying warmth’, ‘Voice management’, ‘Reading patient cues’, ‘Clarification, facilitation and repetition’, ‘Signposting and summarising’, ‘Negotiating a plan of action’, ‘Dealing with emotions’, and boxes with communication skills tips or cultural awareness advice, all these guide learners towards skilful, relationship-building patient-centred communication.

Our conclusion, after many years of teaching English to medical students, is that the best results are obtained by combining materials from various sources, from textbook to online resources, as well as designing original materials, such as online quizzes, according to the learning objectives set for each class. In general, as shown in their feedback, students' favourite activities in the EMP classes are the speaking ones. Speaking is the skill learners believe they will need and use the most in their future career, and even earlier. Most importantly, they will need to be good communicators and build positive relationships with their patients.

## Challenges

One of the challenges that we have faced this year, as we had to conduct our EMP classes online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resides in the difficulty of undertaking speaking activities effectively online, especially those requiring pair work and group work. Thus, it is impossible to do role plays the way they are performed in class, with all the students being active at the same time and the teacher monitoring the activity and helping when

necessary. As role plays are a crucial tool for medical students to learn how to conduct a patient interview, this activity should not be omitted, but rather adapted to the online teaching situation.

One solution we applied was for students to call each other, during or outside the online class, to do the assigned role plays, to record the activity and to upload it on the electronic platform we have worked on (Microsoft Teams in our case). Thus, students can listen to the recording(s) and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in taking a patient history, and they can also receive feedback from their teacher, especially in terms of aspects that need to be improved. Also, one pair could role play the interview in the following class, so as to discuss it and give general feedback to all the class. The success of this asynchronous activity depends on the students' motivation. Also, it is more time consuming for the teacher, who needs to listen to all the uploaded recordings and give feedback to the students.

Another, less effective way to practice such role plays would be to ask several students to do a few role plays during the online class. However, in this case, most students will be passive during that time or barely listening to their classmates, which means that one role play to exemplify the activity, preferably after all the students have completed it, would be just enough for making a point or drawing conclusions.

Another difficulty our students face when practising the clinical interview is their lack of medical knowledge and practice, as they are only in their first or second year of medical school when they study Medical English. While history taking is easier for them to handle, making a diagnosis and giving treatment proves to be quite challenging for them. This is one of main complaints some of the students make in their feedback at the end of the academic year and it is, in our view, the most challenging situation the EMP teacher needs to find solutions for.

## **Conclusion**

Clinical communication is a highly complex process, which requires a number of skills and strategies on the part of the medical practitioner. Becoming aware of all the aspects of effective communication and developing such skills by doing various activities, such as role plays, in the EMP class contribute to more successful doctor-patient interaction and improved patient care. Examining materials that are accessible on the OET website and the Official OET YouTube channel, from Speaking Assessment Criteria to test samples and feedback, proved to be a useful tool for increasing our awareness and understanding of skills that we need to help our medical students improve and strategies that can be used for this purpose. Moreover,



this analysis led to new ideas for designing teaching materials and activities to be used in the EMP class, both online and onsite.

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# EMP Practical Courses as Means of Developing Professionalism in Dentistry

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**Abstract.** This paper presents various means of developing professionalism in dentistry within the undergraduate English for Medical Purposes (EMP) practical courses offered by the Department of Modern Languages at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. This approach is based on the belief that, besides developing students’ oral and written communication skills in English, such a language course can also contribute to improving medical education, thus facilitating the development of successful professionals. In today’s highly competitive healthcare environment, professionalism does not solely refer to qualifications and training but also includes interpersonal and communication skills, ethical conduct or empathy. Consequently, the content of our EMP courses is regularly adapted to meet the students’ needs and expectations as well as to prepare them for the work setting. Thus, in the case of dental students, constant focus is placed on providing favorable learning conditions by selecting meaningful and relevant topics and activities that raise awareness of issues such as professionalism in dentistry, communication and interpersonal skills for patient-centered care, ethical and legal standards in dentistry, dental prophylaxis, dental anxiety management and the complexity of dental care. By tackling these issues in the English class, students can better understand different aspects related to their future profession, perceive various roles and responsibilities, develop empathy, and ultimately train to become competent and dedicated dental professionals aware of their patients’ needs.

**Keywords:** *English for Medical Purposes, professionalism, dentistry, medical education, “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy.*

## Introduction

The Department of Modern Languages at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca offers English, French and German practical courses to first and second year Romanian students, as well as Romanian as a foreign language to first, second and third year international students enrolled in the English and French study programs. Our

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language courses are included in the curricula of all the specializations within the three faculties of the Cluj medical university (Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy) and are therefore compulsory. After choosing one foreign language out of the three offered, Romanian dental students attend weekly 2-hour practical courses in the first two years of their undergraduate study program (four semesters; 56 hours/year). At the end of each academic year, students also sit an examination for which they are awarded two ECTS credits in the first year and three credits in the second year, according to current university regulations.

The main goal of our language courses is to develop the students' written and oral communication skills for general and medical purposes by focusing on all the four skills through communicative, interactive and multimedia teaching methods adapted to the learners' specific language and professional needs. The activities carried out in our classes simulate real-life situations that students are likely to encounter in their future careers, such as interacting with patients and fellow healthcare professionals in various clinical and academic settings, reading and writing specialized texts, listening to lectures, talks or courses, actively participating in scientific and professional events, reporting on cases or delivering oral presentations. The language level of most students is B2 or C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. However, the in-house placement test administered at the beginning of the first year occasionally reveals that some students have lower language proficiency levels indicating mixed-ability classes.

Although our department is primarily concerned with improving linguistic abilities and communication skills in modern languages, we are also fully aware of our role as members of the larger Department of Medical Education within our university, which includes academic disciplines such as Medical Informatics and Biostatistics, Medical Psychology, Medical Skills and Human Sciences, which is further subdivided into Medical Communication, Medical Sociology, Bioethics and the History of Medicine. Therefore, in our capacity as medical educators, we are involved in raising student awareness of various issues related to the healthcare field in the attempt to contribute to the shaping of successful professionals.

In my experience with teaching undergraduate dental students, favorable learning conditions can be created by selecting meaningful and relevant topics such as professionalism in dentistry, communication and interpersonal skills for patient-centered care, ethical and legal standards in dentistry, dental prophylaxis, dental anxiety management and the complexity of dental care. Learning outcomes, student response and student feedback revealed that such issues facilitate the understanding of various aspects

related to the dental profession, the appropriate perception of roles and responsibilities as well as the development of empathy, thus helping shape competent and dedicated dental professionals aware of their patients' needs and expectations.

### **Professionalism in dentistry**

The main goal of tackling the above-mentioned topics with dental students in the EMP class is to ultimately contribute to improving their level of professionalism. Undergraduate dental studies offer all students equal opportunities for development by providing them with the same quantity and quality of specialized knowledge, the same set of practical skills and wide access to study and research facilities. However, despite these similar chances, the “end product” differs greatly and not every student may become what patients generally refer to as “a very good dentist”. Although somewhat subjective, such a label is usually the result of a combination of factors. The dental profession is characterized by fierce competition given the multitude of private practices and their constant battle to attract and maintain patients. Therefore, besides experience, which constitutes a great advantage in any field or situation, and vast financial resources for the purchase of high-tech equipment, what attributes do dental professionals need to have in order to be highly valued by patients and thus gain the visibility and prestige likely to attract even more patients? In other words, what makes a successful dentist?

Even if professionalism in the healthcare field has been a widely researched and discussed topic, the lack of an all-encompassing definition was pointed out by several studies, including a systematic review (Birden et al, 2014). However, despite the constantly changing character of the medical field and of today's society, several key ideas were identified as frequently occurring in the definitions included in the aforementioned publication. Thus, professionalism was often synonymous with medical morality perceived as doctors' choices in stressful situations during routine interaction with patients; the need to adhere to ethical principles was underlined repeatedly; altruism, self-awareness, responsibility for actions, respect for patients, social responsibility and teamwork skills were considered key aspects of medical professionalism.

Several studies also focused on defining professionalism in dentistry as well as on establishing the characteristics of competent professionals in the oral health field. Thus, while knowledge of dentistry is an obvious prerequisite for successful treatment outcomes, appropriate patient care and satisfaction also depend on the dentist's ability to connect with patients as individuals, since professionalism was described “as an image that promotes

a successful relationship with the patient” in which “the patient feels confident in the capabilities of the health care provider” (Brosky et al, 2003, p. 909). Therefore, skills and training, i.e. a dentist’s ability to perform dental work precisely and efficiently must be accompanied by appropriate communication and interpersonal skills that match the expectations of a wide range of patients with different needs, fears, hopes or past experiences. Hence, this view treasures, above all, patients’ trust and confidence in dentists and the dental profession following successful doctor-patient interaction.

Professionalism in the dental office was also summarized as “a dentist’s habitual practice of professional ethics and professional competence”, where competence is understood as the skills required to perform complex activities that are valuable to others, as well as the constant commitment to maintain and improve these skills, while ethics refers to the skills enabling dentists to act in the best interest of their patients according to the ethical standards of the profession, including the need to establish an ideal relation with patients through appropriate dentist-patient interaction (Patthoff & Ozar, 2012). Besides dentists, this view of professionalism in the dental office also refers to the responsibilities of staff such as dental hygienists, assistants, technicians, or administrators, who also contribute to patient care. Although each of these members have specific duties, the dentist ultimately coordinates the running of the practice and should therefore be knowledgeable about numerous aspects ranging from routine tasks, such as scheduling patients effectively, to the quality of services provided by other office staff.

In the attempt to define and discuss dental professionalism, a study highlighted an essential distinction between, on the one hand, how dentists *must* act according to established rules and regulations, which, if broken, lead to sanction and punishment and, on the other hand, how dentists *ought* to act morally, which represents a personal choice and voluntary action closely connected with ethics (Trathen & Gallagher, 2009). The authors further explained the difference between *must* actions, understood as decisions taken by dentists according to minimum standards for the safety of all involved in the medical act (patients, staff, dentists themselves) and *ought* actions, perceived as a constant attempt to improve and achieve more than required, which is a core component of professionalism. In my view, the distinction seems to resemble that between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, where, in this context, the former would describe dentists’ desire to do their job adequately in order to avoid legal consequences, for instance a malpractice suit, while the latter encompasses their individual wish to reach higher ideals, such as establish appropriate interaction with patients, even in the absence of clearly defined obligations in this respect.

The distinction between ideological aspects like altruism, honor and integrity, and normative aspects, such as official standards established by professional bodies (e.g. the General Dental Council in the UK) was also highlighted in a qualitative study on professionalism in dentistry, which started from the premise that professionalism constitutes a key competence that had not been universally defined and measured using appropriate instruments (Zijlstra-Shaw et al, 2013). According to this research, professionalism in dentistry is a second order competence employed while carrying out first order competences such as technical skills. Furthermore, the concept encompasses more than simply carrying out the role of being a dentist and essentially represents a way of thinking focused on professional responsibility and accountability. In this respect, a model of professionalism in dentistry was summarized as a framework that includes tacit aspects represented by “self-awareness, awareness of others, trustworthiness, ability to relate to context”, as well as overt aspects including “vocational, altruistic, responsibility, accountability” (Zijlstra-Shaw et al, 2013, p. E18).

The available research also includes a more recently published systematic review on developing professionalism in dentistry, which established it as a core foundation for health professionals and identified eight types of clinical education practice approaches (Nguyen et al, 2017). Despite mentioning the need to create a working definition of the concept, the literature data included in this review generated a relevant definition in the context of the current paper. Thus, dental professionalism is

a set of competencies that incorporates the values, attributes and behaviors expected by the dental profession and the public. It is established and nurtured through adherence to the principles of ethical reasoning: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and social justice. (Nguyen et al, 2017, p. 23)

Therefore, although an exact assessment of professionalism poses challenges, recurrent components such as expected ethical conduct for maximum patient satisfaction can guide dental education in both clinical and academic settings, in this case helping select relevant teaching materials in the EMP class.

Worldwide interest in the topic is also reflected in the “Statement on Professionalism in Dental Education” formulated by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) based on six major values: competence, fairness, integrity, responsibility, respect, and service-mindedness. In their view, competence is understood as acquiring and maintaining the high level of special knowledge, technical ability, and professional behavior necessary for the provision of clinical care to patients and for effective functioning in the dental education environment”; fairness involves “demonstrating consistency and even-handedness in dealings with others”;

integrity refers to “being honest and demonstrating congruence between one’s values, words, and actions”; responsibility means “being accountable for one’s actions and recognizing and acting upon the special obligations to others that one assumes in joining a profession”, while service-mindedness is characterized by “acting for the benefit of the patients and the public we serve, and approaching those served with compassion (<https://www.adea.org/Pages/Professionalism.aspx>).

In view of the definitions and underlying values included in the above-presented theoretical analysis, this paper regards professionalism as the skills and attributes required for dentists to be considered successful. In this context, success depends on a multitude of factors and can be viewed from two distinct yet interconnected perspectives. Thus, being successful equates highly appreciated by patients and widely acknowledged by the professional community through both formal and informal recognition. Formal recognition can take the shape of reviews posted by patients on the Internet or social media as well as scientific awards and academic prestige leading to increased visibility in communities of practice while informal recognition is the result of word-of-mouth feedback from patients and fellow dental professionals, which also influences the image of a dental practice.

Given the multitude of dental specialties and the need to refer patients to colleagues for specialized treatment, informal recognition, although more difficult to quantify, is crucial since it enables dentists to become part of a professional network that generates revenue and prestige through constant patient supply. For instance, a simple toothache for which a patient presents to a general dentist may be followed by a visit to a dental radiology specialist for imaging investigations, an endodontist for a root canal treatment or even an oral surgeon for a complex tooth extraction. Although many dental clinics now offer most dental specialties, smaller practices still rely on a patient referral system when extensive dental care is required. Dentists will unquestionably refer their patients to fellow dental professionals who are known to have obtained excellent medical results and who were praised by previous patients. Thus, since the opinions of patients and fellow professionals are equally relevant when defining professionalism in dentistry, undergraduate dental students need to understand early in their career that focus on a patient-oriented approach is essential for excellent professional results.

### **EMP as means of developing professionalism in dentistry**

The theoretical analysis included in the previous section of this paper revealed that undergraduate dental students need to develop communication and interpersonal skills that will enable them to not only perform medical acts

correctly but also behave ethically, facilitate appropriate interaction with patients and fellow professionals as well as strive to continuously improve the quality of their services in order to gain public trust and confidence in themselves and the profession as a whole. Therefore, the following sections aim to present various resources, topics and activities that can raise awareness of relevant aspects related to oral health care, thus potentially contributing to higher levels of professionalism in dentistry.

The EMP class is an excellent medium for developing communication and interpersonal skills for patient-centered oral care given the multitude of role-plays that can be organized to simulate various types of interactions occurring in a dental setting. Thus, during such activities, students act as general dentists, dentists of various specialties, dental assistants, receptionists, patients, or patients' families. By assuming all these roles, learners can actively use medical knowledge acquired from specialty courses to communicate in real-life situations. By doing this, they can not only establish connections between undergraduate subjects and perceive the relevance of their medical education as a whole, but also gain confidence in the ability to communicate dental information in English.

Although role-playing essentially involves only two skills, speaking and listening, it also facilitates the active use of specific vocabulary, which motivates and empowers students by already making them feel like dental professionals. During role-playing tasks, vocabulary that had been previously introduced can be activated and revised while new items can be presented in a relevant and meaningful context. Besides the fact that students are always willing to engage in such speaking activities, theoretical evidence supports their use since specificity understood as ability to communicate as insiders of a discipline according to specific genres, practices and conventions was identified as a key feature of English for Specific Purposes (Hyland, 2011). Moreover, role-plays facilitate language learning through the interactive negotiation process involved both during two-way tasks, where students rely on exclusive information, and cooperative tasks, where learners share information, at the same time raising awareness of the importance of conveying meaning appropriately for successful communication (Nation, 2011).

The different tasks that students are supposed to accomplish during role-play activities can also contribute to developing empathy, which is a key component of professionalism in dentistry. Dentists who fully understand the needs, concerns, fears and expectations of their patients or their families, and who are also able to verbalize all these aspects, will undoubtedly be regarded as successful and professional. Therefore, for appropriate patient interaction, dental professionals must use the correct register, select appropriate terminology, and adapt to situations according to the interlocutors' level of



knowledge and understanding. In this respect, research has underlined that EMP teaching should focus not only on the above-mentioned specificity, but also on equipping students with both specialized and lay terms for successful communication (Lu & Corbett, 2012). Role-plays in the EMP class are particularly valuable at this point in the students' medical education given the focus placed on purely theoretical aspects during their preclinical years of training resulting in lack of direct interaction with patients in any language.

### **Teaching resources: coursebooks**

Various teaching resources such as coursebook lessons or materials designed and/or adapted for classroom use, but not published yet, have proven adequate for role-playing tasks. The activities for first year dental students include dentist-patient/ paediatric patient/ parent role-plays on topics such as primary and secondary dentition, dental caries (formation, prevention, treatment), orthodontic treatment, drugs in dental practice and oral prophylaxis, including the roles of nutrition and proper oral hygiene. The *English for Dentistry* coursebook designed by Wawer & Stańska-Bugaj (2007) is usually used to introduce these topics through its thematic units on the design and function of teeth, dental caries or dental specialties while the unit on the dental team offers the chance to also practice receptionist-patient interaction for setting appointments and exchanging basic dental information.

Some content included in this coursebook is more suitable for second year dental students, such as the unit on history taking, which offers numerous chances for dentist-patient interaction, or the one on dental emergencies, in which dentists have to communicate with injured, uncooperative and distressed patients or their family members. In emergency cases, students must use medical alongside dental knowledge to diagnose and treat patients, in which case the first aid course taught in the first year is usually helpful. I also created some dental trauma scenarios in order to provide students with further communicative practice. The emergency dentist receives a checklist of items that need to be covered (patient examination, medical and dental history taking, ordering imaging investigations, making a diagnosis, explaining treatment choices and possible complications, obtaining consent, arranging follow-up) while the patient or the patient's family have a slip of paper with the details of the event causing the dental emergency (example: Patient: Jenny Cook; Age: 4; Chief complaint: pushed down the stairs by a colleague at kindergarten. Dislodged front tooth. Swollen gums. Laceration on left cheek; Vital signs: BP 120/70; Respiration rate: 20; Pulse rate: 20; Temperature: 37°C; Mental status: conscious on arrival; General appearance: Scared but fully conscious. Blood on face).

Another useful resource is represented by a medical coursebook (Milner, 2006) whose Unit 5 focuses on a patient who presents with otalgia that turns out to be related to several dental problems, including oral cancer. Therefore, some of the role-plays based on this unit allow students to take the patient's history, explain various examinations (and perform intra- and extra-oral examinations of colleagues, if they consent), explain risk factors for cancer, underline the role of prevention, deliver bad medical news, prepare patients for surgery, explain specific treatments, risks and complications. This coursebook also features a unit on emergencies, with focus on head and neck injuries, which combines perfectly with the similar unit included in the above-mentioned *English for dentistry* coursebook.

### **Multimedia sources: TED Talks**

Apart from role-playing in the EMP class, the crucial importance of effective communication in medicine is convincingly illustrated by the TED Talk *A Doctor's Touch* (2011, delivered by Abraham Verghese, available on YouTube), which also outlines the qualities of outstanding healthcare professionals. Although this powerful and influential talk does not focus specifically on the oral health care field, its emphasis on trust, patience, confidence and rituals as basic prerequisites for true doctor-patient communication resulting in positive outcomes and increased patient satisfaction levels is highly relevant for the professional development of dental students. The video is usually watched in class at the beginning of the second year, after students had already completed the summer practicum in a dentist's office, which for many represents a first direct encounter with the dental profession.

The summer practicum is an essential component of medical/ dental education, as students not only observe specific aspects related to diagnosing, investigating or treating patients, but they are also provided with the opportunity to witness real doctor/ dentist-patient interaction and thus begin to form a professional identity. This is why TED talk watching is followed by an awareness-raising activity that requires students to list, either individually, in pairs or small groups, positive and negative attributes they would like future patients to use/ not use to describe them. This stage, which often revises or facilitates the introduction of medical/ dental vocabulary in context, is followed by a class discussion in which students present and explain their choices, often drawing on their colleagues' ideas to complete their own lists. The reflection process involved in this activity allows students to begin shaping a professional self as early as possible. At the same time, the speaking, listening and writing skills simultaneously involved in this activity

add teaching value while the students' often enthusiastic involvement reveals its relevance as they often report not having previously reflected about such issues. *A Doctor's Touch* and this particular follow-up activity are usually referred to throughout the remaining academic year as examples of appropriate doctor-patient interaction, communication skills, attributes of health professionals and oral presentation skills.

### **Multimedia sources: documentaries**

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter of this paper, successful dentists are expected to adopt a patient-oriented approach by acting in the patients' best interest, focusing on professional responsibility and accountability as well as displaying a compassionate and empathic attitude for increased patient satisfaction levels. The documentary *The Truth about Your Teeth*, Parts 1 and 2 (2015, BBC, available on YouTube) represents an excellent teaching resource for second year dental students not only by providing genuine examples of dentist-patient interaction in specific contexts that facilitate vocabulary consolidation or acquisition, but also by tackling issues such as patient autonomy, patient rights, informed consent, the management of pediatric patients or dental anxiety.

This documentary offers students the chance to observe how dentists approach patients with various fears and phobias as well as to become aware of the long-term medical and psychological consequences of neglect caused by dental anxiety. The educational aim of using this resource is to increase the students' empathy and offer a model of appropriate professional behavior in delicate situations such as dealing with patients who refuse to undergo dental treatment because of traumatic past experiences. While watching the documentary, students are asked to complete different tasks (answer questions, take notes, complete information on the cases). Follow-up whole-class discussions allow students to not only check and complete their answers but also express different reactions (such as shock at seeing dramatic cases they would not expect to occur in the UK), reflect on their roles and responsibilities when dealing with various types of patients and fully understand how crucial dental prophylaxis is for avoiding complications. Other follow-up activities include role-playing dentist-patient dialogues based on similar situations where the professional is expected to act taking into consideration the patient's expectations, needs and fears. By doing this, students feel they can already communicate as insiders of their discipline, which strengthens confidence and motivation to express themselves in English.

### **Online sources: professional standards in dentistry**

Another aspect pertaining to the dental profession that is tackled in the EMP class concerns ethical and legal standards in dental practice. In this respect, I designed an activity aimed at raising the students' awareness of various issues in dental practice with the help of the nine principles regarded by the UK General Dental Council (GDC) as the foundation of the *Standards for the Dental Team*. The principles are as follows:

put patients' interests first; communicate effectively with patients; obtain valid consent; maintain and protect patients' information; have a clear and effective complaints procedure; work with colleagues in a way that serves the interests of patients; maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills; raise concerns if patients are at risk; make sure your personal behavior maintains patients' confidence in you and the dental profession (<https://standards.gdc-uk.org/>).

The principles are also illustrated by various case studies that provide authenticity at the same time revealing a wide range of duties and responsibilities but also the moral and legal consequences of failing to respect them. In class, after matching each principle with the corresponding case study, students are assigned a case to read in more detail, take notes and then present to another student or group of students, whose task is to identify the principle and discuss the implications of not adhering to it. Asking students to role-play the dental professionals, patients or caseworkers involved in these cases represents another alternative for maximizing the resource. This integrated-skills approach involving reading, summarizing, presenting/ role-playing, and listening benefits students by improving their specific vocabulary as well as their oral presentation and communication skills in a relevant context. At the same time, students become aware of the complex consequences of all their actions as dental professionals. Moreover, students will be able to relate content covered in the EMP class to information provided by future specialized courses on similar topics, thus consolidating their medical education.

### **Online sources: dental cases**

The complexity of dental care and the importance of establishing connections between dental and medical specialties can be highlighted in the EMP class through two integrated-skills activities with strong interdisciplinary component, which are based on cases included in two online resources.

Firstly, [https://www.medscape.com/index/section\\_10178\\_0](https://www.medscape.com/index/section_10178_0) (free registration required for access) offers a section of "Challenging cases in

dental and oral health”, which, despite not necessarily being very recent, are appropriate for second year dental students due to their complexity and interdisciplinarity. For instance, one case presents the consequences of drug abuse and highlights the importance of dental professionals being able to diagnose and treat “meth mouth”, another case presents a patient with acromegaly, mandibular changes and tongue enlargement, others deal with patients with rare or systemic diseases affecting oral health, while most of them also describe modern or innovative dental treatments. In class, students choose one or more cases (depending on time allotted to the activity and group size) to read, summarize according to the structure of case presentations, and familiarize themselves with any new vocabulary. Next, each student presents the case to a group of colleagues in order to gain confidence in their presentation skills before delivering case presentations in front of the whole class later in the year. The group format is highly appreciated especially by weaker students who do not feel disadvantaged or anxious to perform in front of a large audience. At the same time, most students welcome the diverse medical and dental information included in this activity as well as the connections that can be established with specialized courses.

Secondly, the “Case of the Month Archive” offered by the University of Washington School of Dentistry (freely available at <https://dental.washington.edu/oral-pathology/case-of-the-month-archives/>) represents a vast resource that can be used for various purposes. These cases are interactive as they provide students with the chance to make a diagnosis after studying the available medical information for each patient, including history of present illness, past medical history, clinical and radiographic findings, treatment and histologic examinations following incisional or excisional biopsies, thus combining information from the fields of histology, cell biology, pharmacology, surgery and radiology. During face-to-face teaching, second year dental students were asked to choose one case, study it at home in more detail and then deliver a case presentation in front of the whole class, followed by feedback from both teacher and colleagues. Alternatively, during the online teaching conducted in the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the students were asked to submit one written case presentation from this archive as part of their classroom activity. Second year students could also choose to present one case at the end-of-year oral examination on the Microsoft Teams platform, which has been used for teaching, evaluation, and communication purposes by our entire university.

Before both these integrated-skills activities, the structure of case presentations was introduced using Unit 60: Case Presentations from Glendinning & Howard (2007) and the Case Reports unit from Wawer & Stańska-Bugaj (2007), while oral presentation skills were taught with the help of various resources, including online videos and TED Talks. The cases included in these two resources can help students understand the complexity of dental care and the degree of medical knowledge required to treat some dental patients. Another educational reason behind integrating these cases in EMP teaching is the desire to raise awareness of the importance of all medical subjects included in the undergraduate curriculum, given that dental students perceive some courses as less relevant for their future career and therefore slightly disregard them. In the English class, students are often excited about being able to establish various connections and to activate content covered by other courses. Their high level of involvement reinforces the usefulness of such case presentations and the need to find new topics and activities that can contribute to developing professionalism in dentistry.

## Conclusion

EMP is a generous field that offers numerous means of developing the oral and written communication skills of future healthcare professionals while at the same time contributing to shaping professional and even personal identities. After all, the principles and values that guide individuals in their professional and private lives should not differ greatly, although the consequences of work-related actions may have a more visible and long-lasting impact on a range of people, organizations, or institutions. EMP courses do not only tackle specialized vocabulary, plural formation, prefixes, irregular verb forms, systems, diseases, symptoms, instruments, equipment, abbreviations, scientific or academic texts. Exciting topics and relevant tasks can raise awareness of key issues related to the students' future profession, thus rendering classes meaningful and increasing the learners' level of interest and active participation. By offering more than language practice, such courses can integrate the realities of a highly dynamic work setting while new issues and developments in the healthcare field represent a valuable resource and teaching aid. At this point in time, aesthetic dentistry, stem cells in dentistry or dental tourism represent only some topics worthy of incorporating into EMP classes. Future developments in the medical/ dental field and society changes might reshape doctor/dentist – patient communication, the patients' needs and expectations, or the very concept of professionalism in medicine/ dentistry.

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- <https://standards.gdc-uk.org/>

# Ethical Issues in the Medical English Class: Possible Approaches

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**Abstract:** This paper presents possible approaches to ethical issues in the English for Medical Purposes class by focusing on the reactions of second year students to physician-assisted suicide. Thus, we analysed the students' solutions to a hypothetical patient's wish to end his life by collecting answers from an unstructured written task at the end of an EMP class concerning this particular ethical issue in medicine. Our qualitative analysis revealed that such a writing task is valuable for developing the students' level of English as well as for improving their critical thinking skills by reflecting on sensitive issues likely to occur in their future careers as healthcare professionals.

**Keywords:** *EMP, ethical issues in medicine, physician-assisted suicide, qualitative research, formal/informal writing.*

## Introduction

"Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy has three distinct, but inter-connected faculties: the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Dental Medicine and the Faculty of Pharmacy. Students have an array of choices of three foreign languages which they will study for two hours/week for the duration of four semesters: English, French and German. The core curriculum of all three languages is identical, however language instructors follow the topics which are best suited for practicing and learning that particular language. The Department has been using the third principle of the CEFR's (2001, p. 169) curricular which stipulates that the curriculum should be designed in order to provide the students with the ability to use their competences across languages. This paper discusses the role ethical topics

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have in terms of English language practice and learning. The emphasis of this research lies in using human euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide to improve language skills in second year medical students.

English for Specific Purposes classes are generally aimed at developing listening, reading, writing and speaking skills in equal amounts. At “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca the four language skills are addressed using several strategies. The students’ listening abilities are practiced either through specific tasks from various existing course books or through specifically designed exercises based on readily available videos or movies. Reading practice always takes place with the help of texts adapted from the students’ specialty, tailored to their level of medical knowledge. Writing skills are practiced through tasks aimed at writing types of texts which future professionals will need, such as CVs or letters of intent, but mostly by having students fill in various documents related to their future profession, such as patient charts. As far as speaking is concerned, we encourage students to talk to one another by creating dialogues in which they play various roles, for example that of a medical professional and of a patient. Then, students are taught how to speak in public by using the appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Furthermore, in order to promote their abilities to formulate and express opinions, we use debates as a fruitful method of speaking practice. For students of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy, their second year of practical English courses entails various debates, either structured or not. In order to provide a suitable starting point for students to discuss and have clear opinions on, we chose to address different ethical issues in our classes. We have collected a number of teaching materials in the form of texts, short videos, episodes from TV series and films which are suitable for each specialty.

Taking into consideration the fact that the Department of Modern Languages is part of a larger one, called the Department of Medical Education, we, as language instructors, need to address our role as medical educators, and therefore help our students transfer their pre-existing knowledge gained at other courses into the language of instruction. Consequently, in the analysis performed throughout this paper, we emphasise how using topics previously discussed by medical students during their first year in the Bioethics course helps them practice their English language skills. Some of the subjects debated during the English course are controversial topics, such as the following: genetic engineering, alternative medicine, euthanasia, smoking, eugenics, eating habits, controversial drugs, cloning, transplant surgery, and in vitro fertilization, surrogate mothers, or the artificial womb.

## Language Skills in English for Medical Purposes Classes

Maher (1986, p. 114) noted that the early 1960s marked the publishing of the first textbooks for EMP in various countries outside the English-speaking world. Their publishing occurred as a result of a re-orientation within the field of teaching English as a second language. ESP teaching had begun to be more centred on students and their needs. The needs of EMP learners were thought to be closely related to reading and writing research papers, as well as to communicating with patients or fellow healthcare professionals at international conferences.

Ferguson devised a checklist intended to help EMP course design, based on pre-existing needs analysis research:

1. Rapid reading of textbooks/professional journals/papers for information //
2. Detailed study of textbooks/journals/papers, etc. //
3. Writing papers/reports/articles in English for publication/symposia/ conferences //
4. Corresponding with English-speaking colleagues on professional matters //
5. Understanding lectures/papers in English delivered orally at conferences, medical meetings, symposia, etc. //
6. Giving papers/lectures in English at conferences, medical meetings, symposia, etc. //
7. Participating in (i.e. understanding and contributing to) formal discussion at conferences, etc. //
8. Participating in (i.e. understanding and contributing to) informal discussion at conferences, etc. //
9. Participating in post-graduate courses in English-speaking medical institutions //
10. Entertaining/being entertained //
11. Doing clinical work with English-speaking patients //
12. Doing clinical work with English-speaking colleagues (Ferguson, 2013, p. 255)

Therefore, it is clear that there is a need for language instructors to address all the issues presented by Ferguson. Among the most important concerns, the fact that authentic teaching materials provide the best results in ESP in general has been emphasised by Goh (2013), Hirvela (2013) and Hyland (2013), among others. Textbooks tend to have materials created for the use of students due to practical considerations, such as using a certain language level, practicing a specific aspect of language, etc. Thus, the available textbooks require, at times, extra materials which contain natural and authentic language. Natural language can be observed in newspaper clippings or, to some extent, in research articles in the case of reading skills. However, difficulties arise when language instructors are in need of authentic audio material. In the case of the medical field, communication between a professional and a patient is confidential and, as such, difficult to record or transcribe from the point of view of confidentiality.

Consequently, the most authentic language samples which are readily at the disposal of any language instructor are those found in films that have

medical topics. They portray language created for the native speaker and not for learners of English as a second language, forcing students to practice their listening skills more so than with common listening tasks. Antonia Clare stated:

one of the greatest strengths of video is its ability to communicate with viewers on an emotional as well as a cognitive level. We feel, therefore we learn. Video engages the emotions, and this is critical for learning. If you don't care about something, you're not likely to learn much about it. (Clare, 2017, p. 36)

Our teaching experience fully supports the author's ideas, so that our students have proven throughout the years to be more engaged by videos and films (alongside educational games) than by any other type of tasks. Furthermore, the author also noted that "in education, we see that emotion and cognition are very closely interrelated. The aspects of cognition that we use when we're learning something – attention, memory, etc. are all profoundly affected by emotion" (Clare, 2017, p. 36). Therefore, the positive effects of videos have been clearly emphasised by the specialist and, moreover, the need to use materials which have an emotional effect on the learners was confirmed.

### **Medical Ethics in EMP Classes**

Controversial topics spark interest rapidly in students, most probably because there is no general consensus on how to address a certain delicate matter in medicine, thus conferring validity to all educated opinions. Out of all ethical debates, the one surrounding human euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide is among the most fruitful in terms of making students express their opinion and thus practice their language skills.

Euthanasia is generally defined as "a doctor intentionally killing a person by the administration of drugs, at that person's voluntary and competent request", whereas physician-assisted suicide is defined as "a doctor intentionally helping a person to commit suicide by providing drugs for self-administration, at that person's voluntary and competent request" (Materstvedt et al., 2013, p. 97). These two medical acts are discussed extensively by medical literature from the ethical and legal perspectives, as well as in research discussing the integration of ethics courses in the medical curriculum (Goldie 2000, Eckles et al. 2005, etc.).

Practical studies have also been undertaken by researchers in order to discuss how medical students perceive euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide (Jakobs et al. 2018, Pomfret et al. 2018, Rodríguez-Calvo et al. 2019, etc.). However, studies which discuss the utility and applicability of ethical

issues in an EMP class are scarce, despite what we consider to be a very effective topic. Ethical issues or controversial topics in medicine have been used by us at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca for several years now, with very positive results in terms of language practice and learning, as well as in terms of student feedback.

## Methods and Participants

Qualitative research implies that the researcher “is interested in the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and everyday knowledge referring to the issue under study” (Flick 2007, p. 2). Therefore, this type of research is intended to discover the state of facts with respect to a certain topic. However, “there is no need, or even desire, for qualitative analysis to eschew all quantification or use of numbers” (Willis, 2015, p. 12), i.e. the results of qualitative research can, at times, be transposed into numbers for a better understanding of the subject which was studied.

For this study, we decided to analyse the utility of ethical issues in practicing and checking writing skills for second year medical students. Their task followed the watching of the film *You Don't Know Jack*, based on the events concerning the well-known doctor Jack Kevorkian, famously prosecuted in the US for helping patients end their lives. Our students had to discuss their willingness to help a patient end their life, starting from the following situation: “Physician-assisted suicide has become legal in Romania. You have a terminally ill patient whose life expectancy is less than six months. Your patient asks for your help to end his life. Would you help him? Why? Why not? Write your answer in about 150 words.” Their task consisted of a written assignment to be accomplished during class, in order for them to produce an on-the-spot writing sample and to avoid them having the possibility to check their writing using online tools or a third-party assistance. The task was part of their ongoing evaluation.

In the first year, medical students were taught how to write opinion essays and were given information about other types of written papers. Therefore, our first intention was to check whether or not their writing skills had improved from their first-year writing tasks. Also, apart from analysing the students' ability to properly use grammar, syntax, vocabulary and spelling, our research warrants a discussion of the manner in which they constructed their arguments, as well as a brief analysis of the arguments per se.

## Results

We gathered and analysed 153 papers, and separated them into three categories, according to the arguments provided by the students: Yes, No and Not sure. The most relevant fragments from the essays are discussed below.

For reasons pertaining to the ethics of research, we decided to use a simple coding system, i.e. to replace the students' names with S1, S2, S3, etc. The majority (52.94%) of the students – 81 – decided they would help the patient die, whereas 53 (34.64%) claimed they would not. The rest (12.42%) – 19 students – were either not sure about it, or they tended to agree, but would not be able to do it themselves.

For a more fluid discussion, we chose to present the students' responses according to their choice in the matter of physician-assisted suicide. However, we also emphasise and discuss their language skills by presenting various excerpts from their responses. While some of the written samples produced by our students are self-explanatory, others require explanations regarding the usefulness of such tasks in the process of practicing writing. Furthermore, the task generated a plethora of responses with various writing styles that clearly reflect the students' diverse levels of English in terms of grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

## *Yes*

The challenge with which we presented our students generated various answers, and several respondents were intrigued by the fact that they could be in that particular situation at a certain moment in their future careers. The answers given by those who would accept such a role vary in confidence and rationale, depending not only on their conviction, but also on their level of English and fluency in writing. Some responses generated by students prove to be simple in terms of their choice of grammatical structures and lexis, yet clear in conveying the message:

"I am fond of the idea that if I had been in a similar situation, my doctor would have noticed and cared about my last wish" (S1). "I would help him. It might sound cruel to some people or maybe unprofessional even. However, I think that we have no right to judge someone who is making such a decision for himself. [...] One of the main reasons that patients ask for assisted suicide is because they consider themselves a burden for their friends and family" (S2).

Other students who are more accustomed to writing argumentative essays convey their opinions in well-structured written discourses. Therefore, they offer arguments both for and against assisted suicide:

"People often argue on whether it is a medical act which is meant to help the patient or another type of murder" (S3). "I feel like I'd be doing more harm than good by not granting the patient a quick, honourable and painless death, but letting him suffer till the moment of his last breath [...] which goes against my beliefs of keeping the people's lives at a high level" (S4).

Others delve even deeper in the subject, discussing ethical matters and assessing the moral impact of such a decision:

“I consider that medical assisted suicide should be practiced in hospitals under the law and a specialist should be prepared to make such a decision. The practice raises a lot of ethical and moral questions, but I consider that we should find a middle ground and help those in need of it” (S5). “There is a difference between something being legal and something being ethical, one does not include the other. If assisted suicide has already become legal, then the question is: is it ethical, too? Well, there are two principles that sit in opposition: the autonomy of the patient (he chooses what happens to him) and the beneficence/non-maleficence principle (the doctor shouldn’t do anything that would harm the patient)” (S6).

The willingness of our students to provide more elaborate answers is strictly connected to their language skills. The more proficient the student, the more elaborate the answers are. Most, if not all medical students have strong opinions regarding this particular topic. When we practiced speaking with the same groups that were asked to produce a written text, everyone had their own opinion, but some of them attempted to express it in Romanian, because they were not confident enough in their English skills to completely and properly express their thoughts.

Certain students show a lack of understanding of the notions mentioned in the task, as well as the concepts they use, although they have all been discussed in class:

“In my point of view, assisted suicide is something you, as a doctor, should do to protect your patient’s mental health and dignity” (S7). “I, personally, see assisted suicide as a *treatment* for cruel medical conditions” (S8). “Physician assisted suicide is the primary choice in helping them fight the disease” (S9). “By standing against it, it’s like you refuse an actual *treatment*” (S10).

Equating end of life with the notion of *treatment* proves a lack of understanding of the medical aspects of the word, closely correlated with the linguistic ones.

Another student offers a list of pros for physician assisted suicide:

- it offers a sudden, painless death, freeing the patient from its torture caused by the disease;
- it frees the persons that had to take care of the patient from their duty, allowing them to move on with their life and enjoy it as they should;
- it’s way cheaper, for the hospital and for the patient’s family as well, to perform this act instead of providing the drugs that are necessary to alleviate his/her pain or other symptoms, in the long run;
- if the patient consents to this, his/her remaining healthy organs could be harvested and then given to other patients in need, before the organs lose their quality due to the disease” (S11).

This particular example portrays a rather frequent occurrence among our students. They often tend to use an informal style, even when the situation clearly requires a formal one.

### *Not sure*

Most essays in this group could fall under the caption: “Yes, but let somebody else do it”. Students’ opinions are often conflicting: on the one hand they don’t feel at ease with helping somebody end their life, but on the other hand they would refer these patients to a fellow doctor to perform the task. This is understandable, given the complexity of the factors implied by such an ethical question. Some of their answers are as follows:

“I would guide the patient to another doctor who isn’t against assisted suicide” (S12).

“Controversial as it may be, physician assisted suicide represents the manifestation of one’s control over his life, idea which I support and encourage. [...] Though I don’t consider myself mentally strong enough to participate into this kind of act. These memories would haunt me forever and I’ll probably feel guilty” (S13).

“In my opinion, physician assisted suicide is a decent way to end the suffering of terminally ill patients that no longer have any hope. But this does not mean that I would agree to play the role of the doctor in such a scenario” (S14).

“It’s very painful for the patient’s family, but especially for me to do this because I will think of this for the rest of my life” (S15).

“I’m a religious person and as a little child I was raised with some principles and I wouldn’t abandon them just because law has changed. [...] If I would know some doctor who could help him/her with assisted suicide I would provide them his number” (S16).

“It would have a colossal impact over me, over my mind, my soul” (S17).

“A set of new conflicts may arise due to the very religious beliefs of our notion that doctors shouldn’t go around playing God. [...] I do not have that strength nor the confidence in my character to take a person’s life. It’s great that assisted suicide has become legal, but maybe it should be practiced by doctors who don’t feel like they are going to be haunted by this all their lives” (S18).

Contracted forms are again frequent (see S12, S13, S15, S16), whereas one particular student (S18) uses both long forms, as well as contracted forms, venturing closer to a proper formal writing style.

Other students have not yet thought about this or they have never tried, by any stretch of imagination, to view themselves as a doctor required to perform such a task. As stated before, we believe that it may be possible that for others the challenge of offering arguments in English on such a delicate topic is too difficult.

One of the matters tackled by the students is the Hippocratic Oath. In this respect, their views are conflicting. Some believe that it is precisely because of the Oath that they must perform this task:

“I don’t think this practice goes against the Hippocratic Oath, as you are helping a suffering, terminally ill patient to be finally released of all the pain he felt, thus you are not causing in any way more pain or suffering to them” (S19). “Doing no harm includes not letting someone endure a tremendous pain, both physically and emotionally” (S20).

Other students believe that the Oath prevents them from adhering to the practice of physician-assisted suicide: “I am a doctor and I swore an oath never to cause any harm” (S21).

## No

Fifty-three students express themselves against the procedure. Some of them argue that their religious beliefs stand against such an option. Characteristics of the informal style are present in the writings of S22, S23, S24 and S25:

“It’s God’s plan, I wouldn’t want to be responsible for ending a life” (S22). “I have religious and ethical beliefs that prevent me from assuming I am in charge of helping someone die, even if that someone is a terminally ill patient. [...] This concept of putting an end to a life terrifies me and from my perspective it interferes with the actual calling a doctor has, that of saving and improving lives by managing health-related conditions” (S23). “I wouldn’t agree with physician assisted suicide, because it feels like a “God complex”, and I wouldn’t be able to live with myself after this” (S24). “I, personally, think that I’m not in charge of who is living or dying, but I’m able to respect and understand this kind of decisions” (S25).

Expressions such as “for me, life is sacred”, “I strongly believe life is sacred” or “I deeply value life” are common with students that would not assist patients to die.

Other students that do not agree with the act of assisting the patients in dying view life as a *gift*.

“If I were to decide for another person’s life, I would kindly answer: ‘The beginning of your life was not my call, therefore the end of it shouldn’t be either’. My conscience dictated that I am in no position to play the role of God” (S26). “Personally, I don’t think it’s ethical for one to help another take his own life. If I were to do it, I would definitely feel deeply burdened by the fact that it was me who participated, who let that man end his life, when my job is to save lives” (S27).



### Moral grounds are at the core of other opinions:

“I have a responsibility to conduct my life in a way that is beneficial to other people. I don’t think that I can help other people by killing them. It would make me feel like I don’t respect myself” (S28). “Making decisions about other people’s lives or deaths is way beyond the duties of a physician. In my opinion, finding a response to an ethical question or situation is more difficult than finding a solution to a professional one” (S29). “It is very hard to assume you have rights upon one’s life (even if it is your own life) and law cannot change these boundaries. [...] However, assisted suicide may as well become a way of abuse and who would be in charge with assuring that assisted suicide is only being made in case of ill people or for good purpose, not for depressed people, or people with bad intentions?” (S30). “Something inside me, the conscience, the heart, won’t let me do such a job and be peaceful after it” (S31.).

Certain students present more elaborate answers, while also defending their option:

“I really do believe that it is very dangerous for medicine itself that doctors start practicing assisted suicide. As far as I understand it, this is not a doctor’s mission. The whole ‘We’re medics, so we are to end a patient’s suffering’ seems to me like a bunch of nonsense. Killing someone is not what “ending someone’s suffering” means. You end suffering by eliminating the *cause of suffering*. The patient is not suffering because they’re alive! It’s the disease that must be stopped” (S32). “Although I’m a religious person, I don’t consider there is any place for any kind of religion in medicine. The reason that makes me say no is not based on my religion, but on my ethics. We didn’t decide the moment our life started. Why would it be ethical to decide when it ends?” (S33). “I don’t judge those who practice assisted suicide, but I don’t know whether it is the feeling of kindness, altruism, or the pressure of seeing that patient suffering that makes us want to destroy the “view”, the unpleasant part of life that we hate, can’t accept and want to run away from. Are we protecting the patient or are we protecting ourselves from pain?” (S34).

## Conclusions

One of the conclusions we have reached after reading and assessing the papers is that apart from being a useful tool for checking language acquisition and improvement, this type of task proves the necessity of writing practice among medical students. Writing is one of the core abilities developed during language classes, and an important skill for work in the medical field, especially for students that intend to spend time abroad working or studying. Both structured essays and un-structured written assignments contribute to the foreign language learning progress of the students. Furthermore, we have observed the need to practice the differences between

the formal and informal styles, emphasising the students' need to be aware of said differences when using English as a medium of communication.

Another important conclusion of this undertaking is the necessity of tackling such sensitive issues with second year medical students: these are subjects they will eventually encounter during their career. Reflecting upon them, discussing them with their colleagues, debating the most controversial ones – all these contribute to the development of critical thinking, and also to the improvement of the productive language skills: speaking and writing.

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# Boosting Conversation Skills through Game-Type Activities

DENISA-ALEXANDRA IONESCU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This is a follow-up to a previous study on the role of conversation in vocabulary acquisition. The focus is still on these core concepts of the process of learning a foreign language, only this time from the perspective of game-type activities. This approach capitalizes on interactive features and emphasizes peer interaction. It therefore results in a boost of spontaneity and self-confidence of the students in putting into practice their language skills. It is a fun and rewarding approach that teachers can employ as an ice-breaker when dealing with new groups or to enhance conversation skills with already formed groups. The paper is two folded: its theoretical part briefly outlines the current studies in the literature, while its hands-on approach provides samples of game-type activities already used by the author in different contexts, with a wide range of students and competency levels.

**Key words:** *communication, conversation skills, vocabulary acquisition, games.*

## Introduction

The present paper is a follow-up to a previous study on the role of conversation in vocabulary acquisition (Ionescu, 2018, p. 13-23). The study was conducted on 76 students enrolled in the Bachelor's degree programs of the "Gh. Dima" Music Academy and its results featured the students' unbiased opinion in regard to the importance of conversation according to their own personal experience. The questionnaire was meant to illustrate how students felt in regard to the four language skills considered when assessing a speaker's level of competence, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. The participants were asked to name their strengths and weakness in what learning a foreign language was concerned, as well as to point out the skill they would want to improve upon and the one they thought they would use the most in the future. The replies provided by the students indicated that they considered themselves to be far more proficient in reading than in the other skills and the skill the majority of them thought they needed to improve

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upon was speaking, which was equally the skill they felt they would use the most in the future. The questionnaire also aimed to outline the students' opinion in regard to the importance of in-class conversation in relation to achieving proficiency in a foreign language. The results were surprising given their insight and maturity: with a crushing 71,05%, the majority of the respondents considered conversation to be the most important skill at academic level in order to achieve proficiency through practice.

Therefore, researching the role of conversation and the means to create a favourable context for it seemed even more important than before and my interest in regard to this topic resulted in experimenting new approaches and methods that would enable conversation-friendly classes and consequently a boost in students' skills.

I will no longer emphasise the central role that conversation plays in everyday life and interactions, in learning and subsequently putting into practice one's knowledge of a language. The theoretical framework that outlines the concept of "conversation" and the main issues deriving from it are to be found in the aforementioned study. Assuming that I have already laid the grounds and provided arguments to endorse my view on the importance of conversation in ESL and ESP classes, in the following pages I will focus on a practical approach to conversation that I have trialed extensively within our university.

## Goals of the approach

The current approach aims to give students the opportunity to **review and enrich vocabulary** as well as to encourage a **"free" practice of conversational skills**. The suggestions encompassed in this paper provide teachers several opportunities to take a break, once in a while, from the traditional teaching process by engaging their students in more entertaining and interactive classes. In addition, teamwork, the exchange of ideas and negotiations will be encouraged.

The functions of spoken language are interactional and transactional. The primary intention of the former is to maintain social relationships, whereas that of the latter is to convey information and ideas. (...) Communication in the classroom is embedded in meaning-focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. (...) Consequently, the give-and-take exchanges of messages will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intentions in real-life communication. (Shumin, 2002, p. 208)

This is exactly what the game-type activities require by default in order to be successful. This paper explores how different games have been

specifically designed or adapted to enable vocabulary reviews (e.g. *board race* – a challenging and lively way to review the words studied in the previous classes and pertaining to a specific area) and activities meant to enrich the students' vocabulary (e.g. different types of *bingo* focusing on synonyms, opposites, word formation; for further details see section 4. **Sample Activities**). Note should be made that the game-type activities presented in the current paper address learners who have already reached at least a B1 level as described by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Nonetheless, they can be further adapted to any other level of mastery of a foreign language, just as they can be shaped to suit very different kinds of classes, vocabulary and conversational areas as well as a wide age range.

### Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

Just like with any other teaching method or strategy there are pros and cons to the current approach. The students' already acquired skills are different in the same way their temperament and means to relate to the study of a foreign language are. Still, as far as my experiments have shown, the benefits of such an approach seem to outweigh the downsides but I will let the readers be the judges of that.

Game-type activities can be used in different moments throughout the foreign language class. They can serve as pleasant and lively warmers, the teacher can get the students' attention more easily by starting a meeting with a game; if the class is scheduled towards the end of the daily timetable, students may already be tired; therefore a game will animate them and put them in the right mood in order to be able to engage in the activities suggested by the teacher. Games could also be employed after difficult concepts have been taught. In this case, a game will take the weight off the hard to grasp content previously presented. The end of a class may become more spirited due to a game so that students leave the class enthusiastic and full of energy.

Top of the list in terms of **strengths** of this approach is the fact that it *encourages spontaneity*. The thrill of the game makes students forget or at least try to disregard their shyness or quest for perfection that, in other circumstances, might stifle their eagerness to engage in class conversation. Many learners of a foreign language admit that one of the reasons for which they have not become more fluent is due to the fact that they are afraid of making mistakes that interlocutors may make fun of. Involved and committed to the game, eager to win, individuals pay less attention to anxiety or discomfort felt when speaking.

Games serve well also as *ice-breaking activities* when it comes to make new groups bond together.

A key factor in L2 or foreign language development is the opportunity given to learners to speak in the language-promoting interaction. Teachers must arouse in the learners a willingness and need or reason to speak (Shumin, 2002, p. 208).

It is the case, for instance, of first year students who do not know each other or the teacher. Such an activity that I have used very successfully with different groups over the years resides in giving some pieces of information about oneself and let the others ask questions to find out exactly why the speaker has chosen those specific personal details and what they mean to him / her. To break the ice, the teacher is the one who starts by writing on the white board three or four words that stand for something relevant or valuable related to his / her personal or professional life. The students have to ask questions until the answers they get represent the concepts / experiences etc. embodied by the words written on the board. For example, the teacher may write a number representing his / her age or years since they have been teaching; a number representing their birthday (but this is usually one of the first questions students ask); the name of a place, event, a name, etc., anything they consider to be important and relevant for them. Being their first contact, students will be curious to find out things about their new teacher and they will also feel the excitement of being allowed to ask personal questions. The harder the speaker makes it for the audience to get to the right answers, the longer the time people will have to engage in conversation. This is a borderline type of activity touching both the formal and the informal registers. The class can be directed towards very friendly, warm and open interactions that will ease the transition process from people who didn't know each other to classmates who are eager to socialise and get better acquainted. And they won't even be aware of the fact that they are doing this in English! Once the students have managed to find out what each of the words or numbers the teacher had written on the white board for them referred to, volunteers can come to the white board and write down their own clues in order to make the others interested. Conversation therefore continues.

Another asset of this hands-on approach to conversation is that it is *fun* and *rewarding*. Over the years I have come across very few students who are not enthusiastic about the idea of playing a game... especially during classes! Whenever I suggest to them such an activity I also take the opportunity to emphasise that what we are about to engage in is truly a game, but we will also learn something useful in the context of our foreign language class by playing it. The mere idea of being able to do in class something that they have been told they are not allowed to ever since the first grades, i.e. to play games, puts them instantly in a relaxed mood, open to the teacher's

suggestions and to engage in the activity. Another plus of the game is that it encourages *teamwork*. Students are usually split in two teams and the basic rule for every single game is that every interaction has to take place in English. Every decision related to the game is the expression of the consensus of all team members and, of course, all the “negotiations” meant to identify the correct answer / solution to be given have to take place in English. Even the less skilled students feel the thrill of the game and want to get involved; therefore they are more open and willing to make an effort in order to be part of the activity, an aspect more difficult to achieve within traditional classes. Even more so, in the end of the class students feel a *boost of energy and enthusiasm* after they attended “a different type of class” as they usually put it.

What makes this approach very special is that there are *no script, no role-play, or fixed patterns* employed compared to the traditional exercises commonly devised as pretexts to engage in conversation. The latter are embodied by structured or guided discussions which

typically provide a framework within which learners are constrained to operate. Learners receive content input just before the discussion itself; they are then given roles to play, and follow predetermined steps through to the end of the discussion. Language prompts or appropriate wordings are usually provided (...) although the guided approach provides some security for learners, and may help prevent communication breakdown, there is little direct learner involvement in the discussion process. (Green et al., 2002, p. 225)

Such activities do not engage participants to the fullest as they might feel there is no real reason to participate actively in the discussion, their cognitive engagement with the task is likely to be poor and they might lack motivation to develop the topic. There is no stake in terms of personal involvement as this kind of approach “ignores the experiences, values and existing knowledge that individual learners might bring to bear on a discussion topic” (Green et al., 2002, p. 225).

Conversely, the approach I advocate in this paper gives way to interactions that are very similar to real-life conversational circumstances, providing the teacher at the same time the opportunity to introduce *cross-cultural aspects* that may affect social interactions.

Gumperz’s studies have shown that misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication that so often occur between members of minority groups who have English as a second language and English native speakers are not so much due to a lack of syntactic or semantic knowledge but arise because of a lack of knowledge concerning the procedures and strategies used in conversation and the conventions underlying language in use. (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 134)

Therefore, miscommunication occurs not so much because of grammar lacunae as it does due to different ways of speaking and different



ways of structuring discourse. Free conversation taking place in class provides the proper context to point out cultural differences (e.g. the British stereotypical formula “I am afraid there is a slight problem...” is only meant to be polite, nobody is, in fact, afraid of anything), behaviours, customs and the tools to interpret and respond to them accordingly. Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts (1979: 5) identified three main causes of misunderstanding which can arise in conversation:

- misunderstandings which arise from the different cultural assumptions about the situation and about appropriate behaviour and intentions within it;
- misunderstandings which arise from different ways of structuring discourse;
- misunderstandings which occur as a result of the use of a different set of unconscious linguistic conventions such as prosodic features, intonation, stress, etc.

In this situation, the teacher stands for the native speaker meant to make the students aware of their possible misinterpretation of cultural factors or creating the proper context for such observations to be made. The aim of such an activity is to create meaningful conversation. In this line of thought, Gisela Ernst (1994, p. 301) considers that the teacher has an ambivalent role: as an interlocutor, as well as the pillar and the benchmark all interactions rely on as support. A very interesting case is that of cross-cultural classes due to the presence of Erasmus students or even foreign students enrolled in Bachelor's programmes. The National Academy of Music “Gh. Dima,” for instance, welcomes students from abroad and this has given us the opportunity over the years to form cross-cultural classes. This is a great asset for our students who come in direct contact with their peers from other countries and universities, which is a chance to find out about educational programmes abroad, build friendships, etc. In the context of the ESL class, this provides the opportunity to have mixed groups pertaining to different cultures having by default to communicate in English. It is a genuine real-life situation in which students may still benefit from the comfort or the safety net represented by the teacher's presence who they can still address for comprehension checks and requests for help; as a result they feel more at ease and engage in conversation. G. F. Green (2002, p. 231) considers the teacher's role to be crucial as the anchorage needed for information and feedback, though he / she should restrain their involvement in order not to hinder the discussion particularly during the pre-discussion and discussion stages.

Traditionally, grammar was the main concern of teachers of foreign languages and the focus of the learning activities. Recently this perspective has changed with one of the reasons being the fact that “the ability to carry on conversations is not just a reflection of grammatical competence...”

(Schmidt & Frota, 1986, p. 262). As previously mentioned, speaking is considered by the majority of the learners to be the most useful skill in a foreign language. Grammar is important, but it is not the key to successful conversations as “Grammatical competence does not predict conversational ability. Conversely, conversational ability is not necessarily a sign of a sophisticated grammar” (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 214). What most learners want is to become fluent in a foreign language, i.e. to be able to have reasonable speech rates and make themselves understood even if this might sometimes mean to turn to helping strategies such as pauses, repetitions and self-corrections. Repetition, for instance, enables speakers to avoid “the expenditure of valuable processing time that would otherwise be spent on generating original utterances from scratch. But it is a fairly primitive means of maintaining conversational fluency” (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 218). On the other hand, pre-fabricated units memorized over time enable non-native speakers to reach a native-like fluency. Therefore, class-room learners are more likely to achieve considerable communicative success by employing formulaic language. Still, nothing can be compared to the ideal situation of a learner being immersed in the speech community of the target language when this kind of formulaic chunks and fixed phrases are acquired without conscious knowledge or attention, stored and put to use when the situation asks for them this entire process taking place as naturally and possible. Unfortunately, not all students have the means to go abroad in order to be exposed to a specific foreign language and improve their related skills. A question hence arises: how can we make our students benefit from a real-life conversational experience in class? As shown in the author’s previous paper (Ionescu, 2018, p. 13-23), one way to expose learners to genuine language situations is to create opportunities for them to listen to recordings of native speakers, watch movies, read through authentic materials, even play online games which offer users the practical experience and native-speakers’ input needed for them to become proficient. Another way is to create a similar environment in class having the teacher in the role of a native speaker and trying to achieve a conversational process as authentic as possible by engaging students in a game-type activities which will distance them from artificial exchanges and enable them to create real-life interactions. Therefore, over time, one will be able to notice a boost not only in their fluency, but in their *pragmatic competence*, i.e. their “ability to relate language to its contexts of use (...) Some achieve a high degree of competence both in understanding their interlocutors’ communicative purposes, and in producing socially and culturally acceptable responses” (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 223). Therefore, social competence and interpersonal communication are based on experience of control, observation and social persuasion, this being the framework provided by a game-type activity.

The *learner's affective and personality factors* are crucial to the success or failure of language learning. They encompass emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, and motivation. According to each and everyone's personal traits, students may very well benefit from them in L2 conversations, or they may be hindered by them. One of the *weaknesses* of the approach advocated in this paper refers to the specific affective factors which influence negatively the way an individual engages in a communicative act in a foreign language.

Speaking a foreign language in public, especially in front of native speakers, is often anxiety-provoking. Sometimes, extreme anxiety occurs when EFL learners become tongue-tied or lost for words in an unexpected situation, which often leads to discouragement and a general sense of failure. Unlike children, adults are concerned with how they are judged by others. (Shumin, 2002, p. 206)

This kind of behaviour, sometimes even intensified by prior actual experiences, results in the learner's inability to speak English without hesitation. Therefore, when dealing with people with low self-esteem or who are shy, introverts, fearful or preoccupied with the opinion of the others around them, the teacher has to create the proper context for them to feel encouraged and motivated in order to overcome their discomfort and engage in the speaking activity.

Discussions depend for success primarily on the willingness of all participants to make substantial and coherent contributions to the process. Individual contributions depend on a knowledge or experience of the topic under discussion, willingness to express oneself in the target language and personality type (...) extroverts are more likely to communicate effectively than introverts, at least in the early stages of the second language learning programme. (Green et al., 2002, p. 227)

Fear is another emotion that cannot be overlooked when aiming to achieve successful communicative acts.

Fear is multifaceted as it embraces fear of shame, fear of losses in self-esteem, fear of the future, fear of loss of interest and attention of significant others and fear of disapproval on their part. In language education fear will result in lower willingness to communicate, less interpersonal contact, less intercultural competence and lower fluency levels together with a tendency to ignore one's problems and avoid difficulty connected with direct face-to-face communication. (Komorowska, 2016, p. 52)

In the context of the game-type activity, less skilled students might not feel at ease, to say the least, as they cannot be as prompt as their peers in giving the correct answers. They may feel crushed by the more expressive participants and lose the little confidence they possess. The key to overcoming this obstacle resides in forming homogeneous groups which "might well lead the more introverted student away from his or her concern

with rule obedience and correctness to a more unselfconscious and fluent expression of personal knowledge and views” (Green et al., 2002, p. 227). In addition, the game provides motivation, triggers and endorses perseverance and resilience. One other gain following successful teamwork is, especially for less proficient students, the appraisal of their peers which sometimes might turn out to be more important than the teacher’s.

As previously mentioned, for most users of a foreign language the aim is to be able to produce lengthy and complex sentences. The hands-on approach I suggest in this paper focuses specifically on improving *conversational skills*, fluency included. This sometimes happens to the *detriment of grammar* which represents another drawback of the approach that I was able to identify. When in class, in front of groups of students engaged in conversation as a result of a game-activity and not only, I interfere as little as possible so as not to interrupt the normal flow of speech that has been created.

Correcting little grammar errors would mean to hinder the smooth and coherent way in which messages are being conveyed. Mistakes in themselves can teach a lot. It seems that making mistakes and learning from their correction is a natural part of the learning process, so too great rigidity in control may well be counter-productive. (Broughton et al., 1980, p. 81)

Still, if a grammar error is to be repeated several times and all the more so by different speakers, I take a note of that and I decide, according to the situation at hand, whether to approach it on the spot or leave it to the end of the class. As common practice, I usually deal with repair and enrichment of grammar and vocabulary in the post-discussion phase at the end of the class. It should be noted that the game-type activities I hereby advocate are to be used as warmers or for a few minutes of relaxation in all kinds of classes (content or conversation classes, etc.). They are meant to take the pressure off when students have been previously taught difficult to grasp contents, when they are tired or bored. They are not to be used throughout an entire class. They are meant to accompany other types of activities in a funny and entertaining way in order to extract students, for a while, from the traditional educational framework.

## Sample Activities

Readers might benefit from a classification of some of the game-type activities I hereby intend to present and the best suited circumstances for them to be used:

- **warmers:** e.g. *the hangman* – the teacher chooses a word (preferably related to the topic he/she wants to introduce the students to) and writes on the white board only its first letter and as many blanks as the

other letters the word is made of; participants are split in two teams and the game may begin. The teams take it turns and the teacher provides explicit instructions in regard to the fact that no final answer is given by a team unless everyone has stated his/her opinion and the best solution has been voted. With every turn, each team has to choose a letter of the alphabet that they think is to be found in the given word. The teacher writes it on the white board in order to keep track of the letters already mentioned and, if the chosen vowel or consonant is not part of the respective word, he or she will start drawing first the head of the hangman, at the next mistake the neck, etc. until all the body parts have been drawn and that team loses the game;

- ***games meant to review vocabulary:*** e.g. *board race*—a funny and brisk game based on how fast each team gives their answer. Each team chooses a member to represent them and to write on the white board their answer. The board is split in two and the teacher explains in a few words a concept that has been taught in the previous classes. The first team which identifies the specific word and writes it on the board gets the point. The team that wins the game is, of consequence, the one which has the highest number of correct answers. For instance, I have played this game with first year students when talking about body language; the game was very useful in reviewing the related vocabulary: e.g. the students were shown / mimicked different aspects of the body language and they had to provide the proper words for them (e.g. nod, shake one's head, slouch, yawn, etc.);
- ***games aiming to consolidate vocabulary:*** e.g. *bingo*—this game is particularly versatile and can be adapted and used in various ways and for a wide range of topics. If we aim to consolidate and enrich vocabulary, one option is to work with synonyms and opposites. In order to render the game as real as possible, the teacher can create actual bingo cards by using different websites which make this possible quickly and easily. This way, the teacher fills in the words he/she wants students to practice and the software provides the teacher's own bingo card with the words in their original order, and as many as 50 different cards with the same words but scrambled. The teacher calls out a synonym or an opposite of one of the original words and students have to look on their bingo cards for the appropriate word. The team or individual (it can be played also individually) who first gets a line of four words (may that be vertically, horizontally or diagonally) wins the game;
- ***mixed games which serve a complex review of different competences (grammatical, morphological, etc.):*** e.g. *tic-tac-toe (noughts and crosses)*—it's the classical tic-tac-toe made of a square split in nine

categories only that this time the categories pertain to various aspects of the language, namely: articles, verbs, modal verbs, pronunciation, question tags, word odd out, gestures, spelling, etc. The category to be found in the middle (named specifically *Choose a category*) gives the players the opportunity to choose any other category of the ones present on the board. Students are once again split in two teams and they have to think strategically in order to identify the category that would best serve them to win the game. Still, in order to win the category they have chosen, they have to provide the correct answer. If they don't, the other team gets the opportunity to give their own answer and win the respective category and consequently place their nought or their cross in the category. The team which will eventually win the game is the one which succeeds in placing three of their marks in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row. Noteworthy the fact that this too is a versatile game which can easily be adapted in order to focus on vocabulary, word formation, etc.

## Conclusions

I have attempted to provide a rationale to support an experiential and process-oriented approach to the development of discussion skills in a second language class. Within the approach I have trialled over several years and I have hereby presented, conversation is not perceived as a task, but only as a means that allows the student to take part in the game. Therefore, the level of stress and anxiety a learner might experience in a traditional class decreases considerably. Moreover, the focus is on finding the solution and winning while having fun. The strategies employed in a game (see tic-tac-toe for instance) require teamwork and communication is embedded in its very concept. In order to reach the right answer / solution required by the game, participants have to negotiate with one another, have to convince their peers of their suggestion by providing compelling arguments. Hence, another plus of this approach is that it enhances coherence and assertiveness. In addition, it develops the students' strategic competence, namely "the way learners manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals" (Brown, 1994, p. 228) or, simply put, the way in which a speaker of a foreign language manages to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules.

In conclusion, speaking is one of the central elements of communication.

In EFL teaching, it is an aspect that needs special attention and instruction. (...) Effective instruction derived from the careful analysis of this area, together with sufficient language input and speech-promotion activities, will gradually help learners speak English fluently and appropriately (Shumin, 2002, p. 210).

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# Challenges in ESP Acquisition: Bridging Reading Strategy Awareness to Specialized Language Use

OLGA ZINGAN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Reading competence is among the indispensable intellectual skills in engineering students' repertoire. According to reading researchers (Parker, 2009, p.47; Cohen et al, 1979, p.152), in spite of well-acknowledged importance of reading strategies instruction in boosting L2 reading competence, the issue has been considerably disregarded in ESP/EAP teaching and learning. This gap in the students' learning skills is directly reflected on their academic success, in general, and ESP acquisition, in particular. Technical/specialized text reading is quite demanding in terms of text peculiarities – terminology and specific linguistic structures use, text genre, text architecture. Thus, text reading difficulties along with processing time constraints, specific to professional and academic settings, make specialized text reading rather challenging, requiring implementation of an efficient didactic approach. The current study attempts to discuss recent research investigating the influence of reading strategy instruction on L2 reading competence development. First, the nature of the reading competence is revealed. Second, the main types and characteristics of reading strategies are described, particular attention being devoted to reading comprehension strategies. Finally, general pedagogical implications for incorporating reading strategy instruction within ESP teaching are considered. No empirical data is presented in this paper, instead, it aims to relate the instructional model used to guide the engineering students in accessing and applying reading comprehension strategies. By means of the adopted instructional model, pre-, while- and post-reading comprehension strategies are explicitly taught, therefore, bridging the gap between reading strategy awareness and reading skill mastery.

**Keywords:** *reading competence, text comprehension, reading strategy instruction, specialized text.*

## Introduction

Reading competence (RC) has always been considered a prerequisite of students' success in academic settings. Due to increasing global

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interconnection of economic, academic and professional worlds, second/foreign language (L2) reading has become a way of access to general and specialized knowledge as well as the primary tool of autonomous learning beyond the classroom. There is strong evidence that academic language proficiency is acquired through reading, and that knowledge of content is developed through problem solving (Krashen, 2011, p. 391). The author claims that acquisition of the academic language is a *byproduct* in the academic approach to reading (ibid). However, reading is not a scope in itself in academic and professional settings, it is pragmatic by nature, i.e. the purpose of reading is to search/ learn new information to fulfill a task or to solve job-related problems. For that reason, students require sound reading skills/competence to be able to decode, to comprehend, to process the received information through their own schema, to interpret the meaning and critically evaluate the text. In reference to reading, the terms *competence* and *skill* are used interchangeably by many authors and researchers, including the present study, to mean “linguistic knowledge, processing skills, and cognitive abilities” (Koda, 2005, p. 4).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of reading competence, to provide additional insights into the way reading strategies instruction has been implemented within the ESP course, to unveil the strategies which proved to be efficient not just in getting students to engage meaningfully in domain-related readings, but in developing the other basic language skills. Being aware that challenging specialized texts pose high comprehension demands on engineering students, we enquire whether strategic reading of specialized texts can boost ESP learning, in general, and RC development, particularly.

The first issue to be discussed is the nature of reading competence. Grabe & Stoller (2011) bring five important reasons why the one-sentence definition “Reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately” does not reflect the true nature of reading abilities. It does not reveal that (1) the number of ways to engage in reading, as well as the use of various skills and strategies, depends on the purposes of reading; (2) the many skills, processes and knowledge bases act in combination, and often in parallel to create the overall reading comprehension abilities; (3) reading is carried out as a cognitive process that operates under time constraints; (4) the ability to draw and then interpret meaning from a text varies with the L2 proficiency of the reader; and (5) texts are interpreted and used in differing ways, depending on social contexts (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, pp. 3-4). In PISA 2009 (OCDE, 2009, p. 23), reading literacy is defined as “understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with

written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.”

It is generally acknowledged that the ultimate purpose of reading is to make sense of written language. Soto et al. (2019, p. 2) point out that reading comprehension is the set of skills that the subjects invoke to generate a mental representation of the text that is sufficiently coherent and rich enough to adequately understand the material that is being read. Reading comprehension is regarded by various scholars as a complex, constructive, integrative, dynamic, flexible, or strategic process. According to Grab & Stoller (2011, p. xvi), reading comprehension is remarkably complex, involving many processing skills that are coordinated in very efficient combinations. Koda (2005, p. 4) claims that successful comprehension emerges from the integrative interaction of derived text information and preexisting reader knowledge. In other words, comprehension occurs when the reader decodes text information and integrates it into his/her background knowledge to construct text meaning. Duke & Carlisle (2011, p. 200) argue that comprehension is a constructive process – the meaning of the text is accessed through the interaction of reading, text and context factors.

The listener/reader creates and adjusts a mental representation of the meaning of the text, using multiple interacting factors, including the text (its language, content, structure, purpose, and features), the listener or reader (his existing knowledge base, views, purposes, processes, strategies, and skills), and the context in which the communication occurs. (Duke & Carlisle, 2011, p. 200)

Therefore, readers are seen as active constructors of meaning. Readers “bring their prior knowledge to bear on texts, metacognitively monitor their understanding, and use a variety of strategies to repair breakdowns in comprehension” (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017, p. 40). Unquestionably, the reader has the most significant role to play in the development of textual meaning. Successful text comprehension depends, however, on various factors, such as the purpose of reading, the reader's schema (his background knowledge, experiences, beliefs, perceptions, etc.), the strategies employed, motivation for reading, and other factors.

In order to maximize their learning and to achieve success in all curricular disciplines, students need to develop “strategic comprehension processes” (Doug Buehl, 2013, p. 3). According to Anderson (2003), strategies are the conscious actions – “learners' metacognitive awareness” – that help learners cope with encountered difficulties in the learning process. “The use of metacognitive strategies ignites one's thinking and can lead to more profound learning and improved performance, especially among learners who are struggling (ibid)”.

To avoid inconsistency with terminology use, Afferbach et al. (2008, p. 371) made a distinction between *skills* – automatic processes which go below the conscious level, and *strategies* –conscious, deliberately controlled processes. For Grabe & Stoller (2011), *skills*, likewise, represent linguistic processing abilities that are relatively automatic in their use and in their combinations, while *strategies* are not necessarily deliberate actions of the reader. The authors maintain that there is a certain degree of automaticity in the strategy use by the fluent readers, for example, skipping an unknown word while reading. By all means, proficient readers seamlessly switch from skill to strategy. “At the heart of accomplished reading is a balance of both – automatic application and use of reading skills, and intentional, effortful employment of reading strategies—accompanied by the ability to shift between the two when the situation calls for it” (Afferbach et al., 2008, p. 371). It all depends on the mental procedure evoked by the reader. Subsequently, conscious reflection and awareness make skills distinct from strategies. Making a comprehensive difference between reading skill and strategy is important in figuring out how readers learn new skills, how they cope with reading difficulties, also, it is essential in making an informed choice of effective strategies that support comprehension.

*Strategic readers* typically employ multiple strategies to achieve their goals and they do so with a heightened level of metacognitive awareness (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 146). Among the skills and processes employed by the proficient readers are: anticipating text information, selecting key information, organizing and mentally summarizing information, monitoring comprehension, repairing comprehension breakdowns, and matching comprehension output to reader goals (Grabe, 2009, p. 15). Carrel (1998) emphasized that strategic reading is a prime characteristic of expert readers because it is woven into the very fabric of “reading for meaning,” and the development of this cognitive ability. Since strategies are controllable by readers, and reading strategy use reflects both metacognition (the knowledge of strategy use) and motivation (the disposition to use strategies), they become **personal cognitive tools**, states Carrel.

## Literature review

In the late 1970s, with the change of paradigm in education research, particularly the emergence of cognitive psychology, the emphasis from teacher-centered methodologies in ESL/EFL was shifted to learners’ needs/characteristics, learning strategies. Generally, the concept of language learning strategies (LLS) was coined in the field of foreign language teaching with the work of J. Rubin (1975), who anticipated that the way successful

students learn could be embraced by other students to ameliorate their learning. According to J. Rubin (1975, p.43), the good language learners' strategies are "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge". Since then, numerous scholars and researchers focused on investigating this phenomenon from different perspectives and, as a result, a variety of definitions were proposed. O'Malley & Chamot (1990), based on thoughts and actions that human beings use to comprehend, described learning strategies as "special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information" (p. 1). For Oxford (1990, p. 8; 2003) learning strategies are "specifications taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more efficient, and more transferable to new situations". Anderson (2003) stated that strategies are the conscious actions – "learners' metacognitive awareness", that help learners cope with encountered difficulties in the learning process. In the field of second language acquisition, *strategies* are those specific "attacks" or the moment-by-moment techniques that each individual employs to solve "problems" posed by L2 input and output (Brown, 2006, p. 122).

Along with LLS definitions, some language learning characteristics and classifications were put forward. Brown (ibid), for instance, distinguished between input-output strategies: *learning strategies* relate to input, i.e. taking in messages from others (processing, storage, and retrieval), and *communication strategies* pertain to output, delivering messages to others (expressing the meaning productively). Thus, learning is labeled as the input modality and communication – the output modality.

Based on the findings of a range of studies, Griffiths (2014, p. 45) identified three basic types of strategies (*Base*, *Core* and *Plus*), classified according to the level of language proficiency of students.

- *Base* strategies are memory strategies, employed by students in the early stages of their learning.
- *Core* strategies are relating to pronunciation, function, use of resources, and the regulation of learning.
- *Plus & Core-plus* strategies, employed frequently by higher level students, includes strategies relating to all four skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing), to vocabulary, grammar, toleration of ambiguity, management of emotions, and so on.

In the famous LLS taxonomy, R. Oxford (1990) divided strategies into two major categories: *direct strategies* and *indirect strategies*, which laid the fundamentals of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. Direct strategies are specific ways that involve use of language,

sub-divided into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies do not directly involve using of language, but they support the process of language learning, and are further divided into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990). In clarifying the issue with L2 learner strategies, Cohen (1996, p. 2) divided them into *second language learning* and *second language use strategies*. Language learning strategies have an explicit goal of assisting learners in improving their knowledge in a target language, language use strategies focus primarily on employing the language that learners have in their current interlanguage. Language use strategies actually encompass those actions that are clearly aimed at language learning, including retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies, and communication strategies. The scholar asserts that taken together the two types of LLS constitute the steps or actions selected by learners either to improve the L2 learning, or to use it, or both.

Numerous studies (reported in Oxford, 1994) showed that there is no consensus regarding LLS typology, although the phenomenon has been studied extensively over the last decades. The existence of almost two dozen L2 strategy classification systems have been an indicator of a major problem in the research area of L2 learning strategies, specifically, “lack of a coherent, well-accepted system for describing these strategies”, concluded Oxford.

The preoccupation of second language reading researchers for reading strategies began in the late 1970s and early 80s. Strategy instruction research has evolved from laboratory and classroom-based studies of single-strategy instruction, to studies of the teaching small repertoires of strategies, than to studies of teaching these repertoires in more flexible ways and in more collaborative contexts. Michael Pressley, cited by Wilkinson & Son (2011), characterized research on teaching comprehension strategies in terms of three waves of studies. First, *Single Strategy Instruction*, conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s, focused on the effects of teaching individual comprehension strategies to students. These were laboratory and classroom-based studies. Second, *Multiple Strategies Instruction*, conducted in the 1980s, focused on the effects of teaching multiple strategies to students. Third, *Transactional Strategies Instruction*, which began in 1989, was a program of research that Pressley and his colleagues conducted focused on a more flexible approach to teaching multiple strategies to students (Wilkinson & Son, 2011, p. 364). The few early studies – often exploratory, descriptive investigations with small numbers of individual learners, and using think-aloud techniques – identified relationships between certain types of reading strategies and successful and unsuccessful second language reading (Carrel, 1998).

## Strategic Reading Instruction

Taken into consideration that undergraduate students have certain reluctance to L2 reading and insufficient awareness of reading strategies, researches in reading instruction (Anderson, 2003; Carrel 1998; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Grab & Stoller, 2011; Oxford, 1994) urge for enhancing students' reading strategy awareness and practicing an extensive range of them: both issues will ultimately facilitate mastery of reading skills. Coming from different educational backgrounds, university students are expected to exhibit well-formed study skills, among them – a sound reading competence. Students are supposed to cope with much reading and learning tasks, those requiring, by all means, high reading proficiency. The survey, carried out within the pedagogical experiment implemented at TUM, revealed that 30% of questioned students (n=90) either never benefited of L2 reading strategy instruction in formal education settings or were not able to use reading strategies efficiently to get the most from expository texts. However, it is not surprising that the reading competence of a number of students is insufficient to meet the demands of university courses. Due to superficial approach to specialized text reading, the use of undesirable and inefficient techniques of reading (word-for-word reading, skipping the pre-reading stage to commence text reading straight away, halting the reading process to look up every unknown word in dictionaries, reading for the sake of completing a task on teacher's demand, etc.), students struggle with L2 technical text comprehension or abandon the reading of it altogether. On that account, higher-order cognitive skills, such as the ability to analyze, synthesize, solve problems, and think critically, aimed at constructing new meaning from the text, negotiating meanings with the author, remain undeveloped.

The stated problem along with the constantly changing reality requires an appropriate ESP teaching approach that can adapt to concrete learning and professional needs of the target groups. Yet, it is to be remembered that “No Single L2 Instructional Methodology Fits All Students Styles and Strategies”, claims Oxford (2003). In fact, the stated slogan encourages teachers to determine a particular learner's ability and willingness to work within the framework of various instructional methodologies and employ a broad instructional approach, instead of choosing a specific methodology (ibid).

Carrel (1998) notices that the relationships between strategies and comprehension are not simple and straightforward. Use of certain reading strategies does not always lead to successful reading comprehension, while failure to use these strategies or use of other strategies does not always result

in unsuccessful reading comprehension. Even if many L2 students will never become fluent L2 readers, point out Grabe & Stoller (2011, p. 4), they can be taught in ways that lead them in the right direction and help them make as much progress as possible. An important aspect of learning to read is understanding how to use strategies to aid comprehension. In that respect, Anderson (1991), cited by Carrel (1998), revealed in his empirical research that there are no simple correlations or one-to-one relationships between particular strategies and successful or unsuccessful reading comprehension. Duffy evoked that the comprehension process is *fluid*, therefore, it is complicated to teach.

We cannot *proceduralize* comprehension or teach comprehension “rules” because: different readers have different background experiences and construct different meanings; readers must adapt comprehension strategies to many different kinds of text situations; successful readers seldom implement each strategy separately but instead combine several strategies together. (Duffy, 2009, pp. 23-24)

Researchers and educators feature the main characteristics of strategic reading instruction: explaining what comprehension-supporting reading strategies are, and when, where, how, and why those can be used, modeling strategic reading behavior, and providing feedback on student strategy use by teachers (Carrell, 1998). Duke & Pearson (2002, p. 207) advocate for a balanced comprehension instruction which includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing, and discussion of text. The main components in the approach to balanced comprehension instruction are a supportive classroom context and a model of comprehension instruction. The instructional model includes five components: (1) *an explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used*; (2) *modeling of the strategy in action by the teacher and/or student*; (3) *collaborative use of the strategy in action*; (4) *guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility*; and (5) *independent use of the strategy*. Throughout these five phases, it is important that neither the teacher nor the students lose sight of the need to coordinate or orchestrate comprehension strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 210).

As an initial step in teaching reading, L2 teachers should develop the metacognitive awareness of students, realizing its five primary components: (a) *preparing and planning* for effective reading, (b) deciding *when to use* particular reading strategies, (c) knowing how to *monitor* strategy use, (d) learning how to *orchestrate* various strategies, and (e) *evaluating* reading strategy use (Anderson, 2003).

Further step toward *autonomy* implies helping learners to see that raising their conscious awareness of styles and strategies aids them in the authentic use of language beyond the classroom and the language course they are in.

The classroom is an opportunity for learners to begin the journey toward success, and to grasp the reality that beyond those classroom hours are dozens of hours weekly that can be devoted to practice meaningful uses of the new language. (Brown, 2006, p. 146)

## Implementation of Reading Strategy Instruction

Given the presented above challenges that engineering students experience with specialized text reading, there has been launched a reading research project where we could concentrate on improving learning outcomes of students in this particular area. However, in the pedagogical experiment there were involved second-year university students from Urbanism & Architecture, as well as Construction, Geodesy & Cadaster faculties, TUM. The purpose of the experimental study was to elaborate a methodological approach aimed at optimizing ESP learning by means of specialized text reading. The adopted instructional model was designed according to three experimental phases through which pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading strategies were explicitly taught over one semester. Although the ESP curriculum was originally organized around domain-related topics aimed at all basic skills development, the focus was shifted to reading competence development as a trigger in fostering speaking, writing, listening. For us, it was important to identify appropriate comprehension strategies that would enable students extract the communicative value from technical texts, at the same time, would help the struggling learners overcome their reading difficulties.

As a research outcome, there has been published the methodological elaboration “Technical Reading” (Zingan, 2019), where reading strategies to be focused were systematized according to the three text-reading stages. Thus, specific tasks to activate students’ schemata, prediction activities, vocabulary development, and interpreting visual materials strategies were taught within the pre-reading stage. Distinguishing between the main ideas and details, recognizing technical text style and its specific conventions, annotating a text, comprehension monitoring, making inferences etc. were practiced within the while-reading stage. Finally, post-reading strategies included text evaluating, drawing conclusions, making mind maps, extending the research and reporting findings, and so on. Designed from the perspective of integrated approach to competences, the didactic elaboration aims at training an active, competent reader, which adopts a deep approach to reading



specialized texts; attempts to raise students' awareness regarding the use of reading strategies; encourages reflection and critical thinking through heuristic techniques.

### Implications for Strategy Instruction

Duffy pointed out that students are motivated to read when reading empowers or enriches them.

Real readers *do* something with what they read... they use reading to achieve a goal important to *them*, to achieve a purpose of *theirs*, or to answer questions *they* want answered. (Duffy, 2009, pp. 4-5)

The development of fluent reading abilities in a foreign language is a challenging undertaking. The ESP teaching experience allows us to state that specialized text reading is rather challenging for engineering students in terms of required background knowledge, linguistic competence, processing time constraints, as well as technical text peculiarities. So, raising students' strategy awareness and reading strategy use turned out to be a real solution to reducing the anxiety of readers, to building their linguistic confidence, to stimulating their endeavor for reading professional English literature.

To stimulate students' curiosity, teachers should select a motivational content; exploit authentic, open-ended expository texts which raise professional/social/ethical problems, in this way, offering students room for discovering possible solutions to them. In our opinion, when students are motivated to read thought-provoking content, they are open to improving all their language skills: first, to gain access to that information, ultimately, to generate new insight.

In order to avoid monotony in the classroom, there should be adopted an integrated approach to ESP teaching. Regarding the integrated relationship of the language skills, Jordan (1997, p. 6) noticed that the receptive skills (reading and listening) are seen as necessary inputs to the productive skills (speaking and writing), with each receptive skill having its place with each productive skill, depending on the appropriate study situation or activity. Undeniably, most of speaking and writing tasks are reading based. Consequently, receptive skills and production skills should be mutually supportive.

Finally, there is a consensus among researchers and educators that in order to become autonomous learners, students should constantly enrich their reading strategy repertoire. Teachers, on their part, need to closely monitor and teach language learning strategies to all students. Therefore, Pearson & Cervetti concluded that

The Achilles heel for strategy instruction is the difficulty of curricularizing it, that is making it a part of "daily life" in classrooms, not just teaching strategies in short spurts. (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017, p. 35)

## Conclusion

ESP acquisition is rather challenging for students struggling with specialized text reading. Numerous studies in L2 reading instruction support that raising students' strategy awareness and reading strategy use increases specialized text comprehension and improves noticeably students' reading and learning skills. For this reason, the object of this study is to emphasize the importance of teaching these strategies to engineering students to enable them to use reading strategies consciously in various reading contexts, in an orchestrated manner.

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# Limba română pentru scopuri academice

ANCA GÂȚĂ<sup>1</sup>

**Rezumat.** Studiul abordează problematica predării limbii române pentru scopuri academice, având în vedere necesitatea delimitării unor conținuturi lingvistice specifice în cadrul secvențelor de predare-învățare la „anul pregătitor” și al cursurilor lectoratelor românești din străinătate. Secțiunile comunicării vizează: 1) considerații de natură terminologică cu privire la sintagme utilizate în subdomeniile lingvisticii aplicate și didacticii limbilor străine (language acquisition, additional language, limba română pentru scopuri specifice / academice); 2) conținuturi de predare-învățare specifice didacticii limbii române pentru scopuri academice în corelație cu nivelele de competențe lingvistice din CECRL; 3) dificultățile și constrângerile impuse de realități de ordin cultural și de tradiție școlastică / academică cu privire la componente ale referențialului didactic reflectate în tematica activităților didactice și elaborării de materiale suport (selectare și creare de conținuturi) – în special, necesitatea, în curriculumul academic, existenței unor discipline numite în cadrele studiului și pentru rațiuni instrumentale, spre exemplu, „Româna academică / pentru scopuri academice / universitare”, „Româna pentru scopuri științifice”, „Redactare și compoziție”, foarte precar substituite de discipline din domeniul Comunicare / Comunicare profesională.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *an pregătitor RLS, competențe lingvistice, CECRL (Cadrul european de referință pentru limbi), referențial didactic, româna ca limbă străină (RLS / LRLS).*

## Introducere

Studiul de față face parte dintr-un proiect mai amplu de abordare conceptuală a referențialelor de conținuturi didactice pentru predarea limbii române ca limbă străină (LRLS). Sunt prezentate în rândurile de față ideile preliminare care fundamentează un demers destinat didacticienilor formatori și autori de manuale și materiale suport pentru LRLS.

## Module complementare în predarea limbii române ca limbă străină

Termenii (specializați) din Tabelul 1, care circulă și sub formă de acronime relativ cunoscute, nu denumesc (sub)registre funcționale ale

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limbilor în cauză, ci sunt „etichete” ale unor discipline de studiu sau denumiri generice pentru un ansamblu de competențe (lingvistice și culturale) cărora li se asociază strategii didactice specifice.

**Tabelul 1. Ansambluri de competențe lingvistice în domeniul predării limbilor străine**

ESP	English for Specific Purposes	Engleza pentru scopuri specifice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes	Engleza pentru scopuri academice
	Academic English	Engleza academică
EAL	English as an additional language	Engleza ca limbă auxiliară
FOS	Français sur objectif(s) spécifique(s)	Franceza pentru obiective specifice
FOU	Français sur objectif(s) universitaire(s)	Franceza pentru obiective universitare
	Français de spécialité	Franceza specializată / de specialitate
	Akademisches Schreiben	Scriere academică
(L)RLS	Româna / Limba română ca limbă străină	

În timp, termenii în cauză ajung să corespundă unor reprezentări complexe despre modul în care este predată și învățată o anumită limbă. Astfel, se creează *branduri* din procedee, metode și tehnici de formare și dezvoltare a competențelor de comunicare în altă limbă decât cea maternă. Aceste discipline de studiu, unele delimitate ca sub-discipline, își construiesc tradiția în spații culturale diverse și se adresează unor categorii de public distincte, de regulă de nivel postliceal sau universitar. În mare parte, și generalizând reprezentările în limitele studiului de față, publicul vizat este constituit din studenți (vorbitori nenativi) înscriși în programe de studii desfășurate în alte limbi decât cea maternă sau în care au studiat anterior.

Pentru limba română, se pot distinge câteva categorii prototipice de „studenți străini”<sup>2</sup>: a) înscriși în „anul pregătitor” de limbă și cultură română<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>2</sup> Sintagma „studenți străini” este folosită aici generic, în raport cu limba română și contextul academic românesc, cu referire la diversele categorii de studenți *nevorbitori de română*, fie din România, fie din alte spații culturale. Termenul, cu un înțeles mai restrictiv, datează din perioada anilor 1970-90 (cf. și Moldovan, 2012, p. 9), neavând nicio conotație peiorativă. Regimul comunist a încurajat școlarizarea la nivel universitar, contra cost, a solicitanților din străinătate, atrași în special de universitățile de medicină, farmacie, tehnice, dar și de alte programe de studii. Teoretic, aceștia puteau fi studenți ai oricărei specializări, cu condiția absolvirii unui an pregătitor de limbă și cultură română, căci studiile se făceau *numai* în limba română, neexistând filiere franco- sau anglofone. Excepție făceau cursurile de la specializările filologice, în cea mai mare parte în limbi străine, însă nicidecum exclusiv. Astfel, condiția fundamentală pentru a face studii universitare în România era cunoașterea limbii de stat. În acea perioadă a început să se dezvolte didactica limbii române ca limbă străină și pentru scopuri specifice, cu rezultate deosebite, și tot atunci a început elaborarea, în majoritatea centrelor universitare, a unor instrumente lingvistice, suporturi de curs și manuale de limba română ca limbă străină, a căror tradiție este continuată de cele recente. (Dorobăț & Fotea, 1999, Moldovan et al., 2001, Suciuc & Fazakas, 2006, Platon et al. 2012a, 2012b, Sterpu, 2012; ș.a., v. Moldovan, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Anul pregătitor continuă să existe, pe modelul celui de altădată, cf. nota precedentă. Primele săptămâni de imersie lingvistică ale acestor studenți corespund în mare măsură acumulării de deprinderi lingvistice de bază, testate și completate în contexte de comunicare reale și asemănătoare, spre exemplu, celor vizate de cursurile de Engleză ca limbă auxiliară (cf., de ex., McEachron &

înainte de admiterea la un program de studii universitare în limba română; b) înscriși în programe de studii în limbi străine din universități românești<sup>4</sup>; c) înscriși în programe sau module de studii de limbă română în universități din străinătate<sup>5</sup>. Cel mai adesea, e vorba despre studenți a căror limbă maternă este alta decât româna, pe care o studiază ca limbă străină, și eventual în care studiază, fie în România, unde au șansa imersiei lingvistice, fie în țara de origine sau o alta în care își fac studiile.<sup>6</sup> În majoritatea cazurilor, pentru aceste categorii prototipice de studenți, disciplina *limba română* se studiază și este cunoscută de specialiști sub o denumire fundamentată de tradiția didactică și lingvistică europeană și internațională, *Limba română ca limbă străină / Româna ca limbă străină* (RLS).

În țările cu lungă tradiție de predare a limbii de stat ca limbă străină, elaborarea de materiale pentru predarea unora dintre disciplinele amintite se face de către edituri consacrate (ex. Clé International, Langenscheidt, etc.). Pe lângă acestea, editurile specializate în producția de manuale de limbi străine care vizează în special competențele lingvistice de bază (nivelele A1-B1) sunt cei mai puternici concurenți de pe piața externă ai manualelor RLS elaborate în România (ex. Pons-Verlag, Helmut Buske Verlag GmbH).

Pentru domeniile și disciplinele menționate în Tabelul 1 există (serii de) manuale, unele revizuite, altele foarte recente. Cambridge University Press, de exemplu, produce o întreagă serie dedicată registrului etichetat *Academic English*. Nevoia de resurse de acest tip are uneori ca rezultat elaborarea de astfel de suporturi de către specialiști din alte țări decât cea de origine a unei limbi; din diverse considerente, aceștia creează manuale de limbi străine vizând competențe specifice, precum comunicarea pentru scopuri universitare (Francic & Ruet, 2014) care le suplinesc sau le concurează pe cele produse de editurile specializate din țările ale căror limbi oficiale justifică un asemenea demers.

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Bhatti, 2015; trad. mea, A.G.) pentru grupuri țintă din Australia la nivel preuniversitar, academic sau cu interese ocupaționale.

<sup>4</sup> Există programe de studii care se desfășoară într-o limbă cu circulație internațională, neexistând necesitatea ca studenții să cunoască limba română în fazele inițiale ale școlarizării. Ulterior, obligația de a urma stagii de practică în mediul socio-economic românesc face imperios necesară utilizarea limbii române. În acest scop, li se asigură pe parcursul școlarizării cursuri de limbă română.

<sup>5</sup> Distincțiile care se pot face în acest caz privesc programele de studii de la universități din străinătate în care, pe de o parte limba și cultura română sunt o componentă a unui program de licență sau de master, studiindu-se în mai multe semestre, cu un număr consistent de ore de la nivel A1 până la nivel C1, chiar C2, iar pe de altă parte limba și/sau cultura română se studiază în cadrul unor discipline opționale sau facultative, uneori cu lipsa obligației pentru student de a obține un număr de credite sau de a promova un examen.

<sup>6</sup> O situație aparte este reprezentată de studenții din alte țări care provin din familii de origine română, au anumite cunoștințe de limbă română și aleg fie să studieze în România orice program de studii, fie să studieze româna în țara în care trăiesc și și-au făcut cea mai mare parte din studii. Nu mă voi referi la această categorie importantă decât marginal, deoarece merită o atenție specială.

Este de remarcat și tendința inversă, de a traduce, de exemplu, din limba engleză în română, un manual de scriere academică<sup>7</sup> (Graff & Birkenstein, 2015). Lucrarea are calități reale, din păcate mult diminuate de superficialitatea traducerii. Respectivul manual nu poate însă suplini necesitatea de formare și consiliere în domeniul *scrierii academice în limba română* pe baza unor referințe la fragmente de discurs traduse din engleză. Pe de altă parte, manualul în cauză conține informații pertinente cu privire la anumite acte de limbaj efectuate în comunicarea academică, spre exemplu, în scopul exprimării opiniei, dezacordului, solicitării de clarificări, prezentării unor explicații etc. Din același motiv menționat anterior, dar și pentru că există modele de comunicare determinate cultural, traducerea anumitor structuri de acest tip în limba română nu este totdeauna soluția cea mai potrivită. Dacă editura alege să propună cititorului un astfel de manual, el necesită o minuțioasă adaptare<sup>8</sup>, însă succesul comercial ar fi mai durabil dacă un produs atât de complex ar fi elaborat de un autor autohton.

În cele ce urmează, studiul de față pune în relație aceste constatări cu preocuparea metodologică de stabilire a unor puncte de contact între *româna ca limbă străină* – nivelele B2-C2 și ansamblurile de competențe identificate prin termenii amintiți în didactica limbilor străine. Pentru că nici documentarea în cataloagele bibliotecilor din țară, nici interogările digitale în Internet cu privire la sintagme precum *româna academică*, *româna pentru scopuri universitare / academice* nu furnizează rezultate relevante, fac ipoteza că aceste varietăți de competențe nu sunt identificate în tradiția didactică

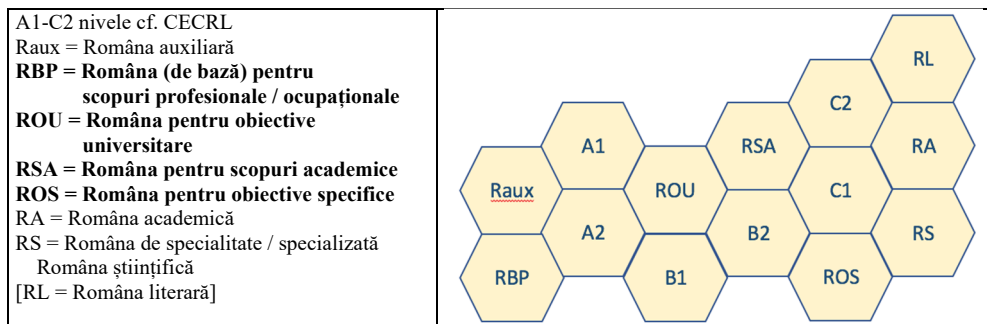
<sup>7</sup> Un astfel de demers pare contrariant, pentru că dezvoltarea competențelor de scriere academică nu se face doar pe baza unor considerații generale, ci și a unor aspecte concrete, cu privire la sintaxă, vocabular, structuri și operații de textualizare caracteristice unei limbi. Prin urmare, e destul de greu de acceptat relevanța și utilitatea unei asemenea traduceri. Descrierea de pe coperta a patra dă o oarecare idee despre conținutul volumului, de altfel foarte util și adecvat pentru anglofoni. Chiar și în acest text de dimensiuni reduse, traducerea e discutabilă. Ea lasă foarte mult de dorit în ansamblul volumului, atât ca exemplu de „limbă academică”, cât și de „limbă standard”, care teoretic fac obiectul respectivei lucrări. Evidențiez în continuare secvențele problematice în traducerea prezentării de pe copertă tocmai din perspectiva studiului de față și a scrierii academice (care se presupune că păstrează aceleași standarde și în traducere); fiind vorba mai curând de asperități, de erori stilistice de traducere, mă limitez la a le identifica (italicele mele): „Cel mai bine vândut manual de scriere academică din lume! Un *scop central* al prezentei cărți este *să demistifice scrierea academică prin întoarcerea acesteia la rădăcinile sale sociale și conversaționale*. Deși *scrierea* poate cere o anumită doză de liniște și singurătate, modelul „*Ei spun / Eu spun*” le arată studenților că pot să-și dezvolte ideile nu doar privind *înăuntrul lor*, ci și făcând ceea ce fac adesea într-o *bună conversație* cu prietenii și familia – ascultând atent ce spun alții și intrând în dialog cu alte idei. Abordarea scrierii are, prin urmare, o dimensiune etică, de vreme ce le cere scriitorilor nu doar să tot *probeze* și să reafirme ceea ce ei cred deja, ci și *să lărgească ceea ce cred* prin confruntarea cu opinii care diferă, uneori radical, de ale lor. Într-o societate tot mai diversă, *mai globală*, această abilitate de a te confrunta cu ideile altora *e în mod special crucială* pentru o *cetățenie / comunitate democratică*.” (Graff & Birkenstein 2015, trad. L. Poantă)

<sup>8</sup> Prezentarea și remedierea, cu titlu de exercițiu, a asperităților din textul tradus nu este nici utilă, nici constructivă, căci textul s-ar cere în mare măsură rescris. În practica de traducere, o astfel de activitate se regăsește în cea de *localizare* a artefactelor lingvistice.

românească ca formând o zonă de investigație conceptuală și științifică, și propun un început de sistematizare. Pentru a evita orice confuzie sau interpretare eronată, subliniez din nou că sintagmele propuse ca termeni sau etichete nu fac referire în niciun caz la un registru funcțional sau o varietate a limbii române, ci la conceptualizarea unei zone de interes didactic cu privire la româna ca limbă străină. Motivația propunerilor este de natură strict metodologică și de are ca scop cartografierea unui referențial mai clar și mai adecvat.

### Limba română academică / pentru scopuri academice / universitare

Titlul acestei secțiuni indică ezitarea în a identifica cea mai adecvată etichetă în contextul românesc pentru o disciplină al cărei scop este de a forma competențe de comunicare conform Cadrului european de referință pentru limbi. Din perspectiva didacticii limbilor străine, specificitatea<sup>9</sup> limbii române face ca însușirea unor reguli și automatisme de către nenativi să fie destul de lentă. De aceea, parcursul între nivelele A1-B1, așa cum sunt conceptualizate în CECRL, este extrem de lung. Este și motivul pentru care segmentarea practică pe sub-nivele (A1.1, A1.2 etc.) este foarte utilă. Însă și la nivel A1 poate fi necesară o orientare a demersului didactic spre româna pentru scopuri „ocupaționale” / profesionale sau universitare (în sensul FOU). În cele ce urmează, propun un concept complementar reprezentărilor disponibile ale demersului pedagogic LRLS și explic termenii provizorii din Fig. 1 într-o ordine dictată de interferențele conceptuale și de importanța lor în raport cu termenul central care interesează studiul de față, RSA, *Româna pentru Scopuri Academice*.



**Fig. 1.** Nivele convenționale și nivele complementare în predarea limbii române ca limbă străină

<sup>9</sup> Limbă puțin vorbită și auzită în afara granițelor naționale, cu excepția Republicii Moldova și a comunităților de origine românească din spațiul UE (migranți și rezidenți în alte țări), româna este relativ bogată la nivelul lexicului comun, cu (pseudo-)dublete lexicale formate din itemi proveniți din fondul (neo)romanic, slav, grec etc., prezintă extrem de multe tipare morfo-sintactice etc.



Urmărind o cartografiere suplimentară față de CECRL a competențelor de limbi străine, „peticele” din Fig. 1 delimitează parcursuri didactice posibile, permițând reprezentarea interferențelor absolut naturale între nivelele de competență corespunzătoare CECRL. Schematizarea din Fig. 1 are totodată în vedere faptul că formularea *un cursant de nivel A2* presupune că respectivul cursant a fost evaluat ca având nivelul A2 și practic se află la nivelul următor, care, dacă nu se precizează altfel, poate fi oriunde între B1.1 și B1.2, posibil chiar aproape de B2.

Termenul **Româna auxiliară** (provizoriu, și nu în sensul de limbă auxiliară internațională) corespunde competențelor de bază, care includ familiarizarea cu alfabetul latin, modul de articulare, pronunția și grafia cuvintelor de bază. Însușirea competențelor specifice acestui „pre-nivel” poate fi susținută prin strategii didactice specifice în cadre instituționale, dar de foarte multe ori ele se fixează natural la nivelul A1, în mediul social, și continuă să se fixeze la A2. Româna auxiliară nu este obiectul acestui studiu.

În perspectiva didacticii limbilor străine, este clară distincția terminologică și conceptuală între ceea ce s-ar putea numi **Româna academică** și ceea ce poate fi cu certitudine numit – pe model francofon – **Româna pentru obiective universitare**. O suprapunere între cele două noțiuni este inevitabilă. În schematizarea propusă în Fig. 1 cele două zone nu sunt totuși nici măcar contigue. Situația corespunde mai curând unui proces de osmoză: studentul care și-a însușit un set suficient de larg de competențe specifice *Românei pentru obiective universitare*, studiind nivelul A2 și tinzând către B1, posedă și unele competențe specifice **Românei pentru scopuri academice** și chiar nivelelor C1-C2. Acest lucru este posibil deoarece, pe de o parte, competența lexicală poate fi mult mai avansată pentru anumite domenii ontologice și mult mai avansată în general față de competența gramaticală. Cu alte cuvinte, o performanță gramaticală de nivel B1 nu împiedică o performanță lexicală de nivel C1. O dovadă empirică în acest sens este faptul că aprecierea nivelului de competență lingvistică prin teste permite evaluarea competențelor combinate. Mai mult, competențele de înțelegere a discursului scris (lectură-înțelegere) sunt de regulă mult superioare celor de înțelegere a discursului vorbit (ascultare – înțelegere), la rândul-le superioare celor de producere de discurs oral sau text scris; acestea din urmă diferă de la locutor la locutor: cele patru tipuri de deprinderi pot fi și ele evaluate descrescător de la C1 la B2, până la B1.

Zonele tampon C1-C2 între ceea ce am numit *Româna academică* și *Româna pentru scopuri academice* corespund în special realizărilor gramaticale și de structură complexă a frazei. Cel care are competențe de nivel B1.2, conform unei evaluări, și se află în curs de dobândire a unor competențe de nivel B2.1 poate transgresa cu ușurință nivelul B2.2 pentru a intra în zona

unor competențe C1 sau chiar de ***Română pentru obiective specifice*** ori ***Română pentru scopuri academice***. Adesea asemenea transgresări pot fi influențate de interesele speciale ale cursantului.

Sintagma / termenul *Româna academică* – care poate fi concurat(ă) de sintagma ***Româna științifică*** – vizează un sub-registru funcțional în care se regăsesc realizări lingvistice în scris sau orale, precum cele de natura capitolelor de monografii științifice, articolelor publicate în reviste științifice, respectiv prezentărilor / comunicărilor în conferințe. În timp ce primele două categorii respectă reguli mai stricte, cea din urmă împrumută unele caracteristici generale ale comunicării verbale. Dacă termenul *Româna științifică* pare a avea o aplicabilitate restrânsă (tocmai la categoriile enumerate), termenul *Româna academică* are avantajul de a putea acoperi și zonele criticii literare, eseului filosofic, criticii de artă. Cu toate acestea, privind lucrurile analogic, inexistența termenului sau etichetei *Franceza academică* în spațiul francophon, în care funcționează Academia franceză, orientează către o reevaluare a adecvării termenului, cele două situații fiind asemănătoare din punct de vedere instituțional. De aceea, în pofida existenței termenului *Engleza academică*, este probabil de preferat evitarea corespondentului pentru limba română. Este și motivul pentru care, în schematizarea propusă, am reprezentat către exterior / margine cele trei ansambluri de competențe RA, RS, RL. Ele pot fi eliminate din schematizare, iar dacă le acceptăm ca noțiuni, ne apropiem foarte mult de ceea ce tradiția a consacrat drept stiluri funcționale.

*Româna pentru scopuri academice* pare un termen mai adecvat pentru a numi un ansamblu de competențe de comunicare destul de diverse, a căror stăpânire este necesară pentru a avea un bun parcurs academic în diferite etape ale învățământului universitar, de la admitere (care presupune un examen de bacalaureat promovat) până la obținerea diplomei de doctor în științe. Demersul de conceptualizare pe care îl propun pornește de la analogia cu situația francezei: necesitatea disciplinară a *Francezei pentru obiective universitare* s-a relevat după dezvoltarea didacticii și eforturile de cartografiere teoretică și procedurală a *Francezei pentru scopuri specifice* (cf. Mangiante & Parpette 2004, 2011a, 2011b; Eisenbeis 2007; Parpette, 2010; Cailler & Borg, 2011; Dřevojánková, 2014; Bordo et al., 2016). Astfel, termenul *Româna pentru scopuri academice* ar avea avantajul de a îngloba o clasă destul de largă de competențe de comunicare, subordonându-și-le pe cele incluse într-o prezumtivă sub-disciplină *Româna pentru obiective universitare*. Totodată, româna pentru scopuri academice poate îngloba și segmentele avansate, respectiv nivelele C1-C2, din disciplina *Româna ca limbă străină*, ca și *Scrierea academică în limba română*, care se regăsește, de exemplu, în disciplina *Redactare de text* – în cadrul modulului de Discurs

argumentativ în programul de master (Universitatea din București, Prof. dr. Rodica Zafiu). În felul acesta, s-ar realiza și conceptual continuitatea între RLS și nivelul de „măiestrie” lingvistică (C2-RA-RL), care în practică poate fi constatat pentru limba română la vorbitori nenativi.

## Româna pentru obiective universitare

*Româna pentru obiective universitare*, propusă ca subdomeniu al RLS pe baza modelului francofon, se distinge de acesta prin programul de tip an pregătitor. Grupul țintă prototipic este reprezentat de străinii care au ca obiectiv înscrierea ca studenți la un program de studii din spațiul românofon. Alte subtipuri de grup țintă sunt studenții care fac stagii Erasmus de 1-2 semestre, dar și cei înscriși în programe de studii extra- / transfrontaliere, fără a avea cunoștințe de limba română.<sup>10</sup>

Tematicile vizate sunt luarea de notițe la cursurile magistrale, documentarea individuală, fișele bibliografice de sinteză, inclusiv gestionarea informațiilor în mini-sisteme digitale personale, precum și rezumatul, textul de sinteză de informații. În multe dintre aceste situații se pot utiliza simulări de interacțiuni reale de durată foarte scurtă. Un exemplu de antrenament pentru luarea de notițe este prezentarea unui subiect de la frontiera dintre cultură generală, enciclopedică și un domeniu specializat (de ex. geografie, istorie, biologie, sănătate, chimie, fizică). Cu privire la rezumat și sinteza de text, studii reprezentative în domeniu, care au căpătat în timp notorietate (Collingwood & Hughes 1978, Russell 1979), arată că atât vorbitorii nativi ai unei limbi, cât și cei care și-o însușesc în diverse etape ale existenței au dificultăți în a identifica cuvintele cheie, ideile principale, sensul unei argumentații etc.

În alte sisteme de învățământ a existat sau încă există, mai ales în clasele de final de ciclu preuniversitar, tradiția unor activități precum sinteza de text, rezumatul de text argumentativ, eseul de tip comentariu pe marginea unui subiect de discuție ilustrat prin discursuri reale (texte sau, mai recent, videoclipuri). Sistemul românesc pare să neglijeze astfel de activități, care ar presupune și un consum apreciabil de timp și energie pentru discutarea și evaluarea produsului activităților concrete ale fiecărui elev (nu am identificat publicații ale unor autori români care să se preocupe de aceste aspecte).

Studiul de față nu le are în vedere în mod detaliat pe acestea, ci mai curând zona de interferență și suprapuneri cu ceea ce am putea numi *Româna*

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<sup>10</sup> O situație de acest fel este filiera de specializări medicale pe care Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” le școlarizează la Enna, Italia, în limba română după ce studenții urmează un program lingvistic de tip an pregătitor. Studenții admiși la această filieră nu cunosc, de regulă, limba română, deși – teoretic – unii dintre ei pot fi și din familii de origine română.

*pentru scopuri academice*. O parte dintre competențele care țin de *Româna pentru obiective universitare* sunt relevate în lucrări de tip ghid academic (v. Umberto Eco, *Cum se scrie o lucrare de licență*). Altele, referitoare la particularități de citare, indicare a surselor (v. lucrări de tip *Introducere în filologie*) se regăsesc în domeniul de interes al *Românei pentru scopuri academice*. În cele ce urmează nu sunt detaliate astfel de aspecte, ci sunt prezentate exemple de modalități de abordare a materialului lingvistic în scopul dezvoltării deprinderilor de comunicare orală și în scris în limba română ale studenților străini la nivelele B1-C2. În general, nivelul C2 este doar la modul ideal abordat în interacțiunea cu studentul. Fiind complet independent lingvistic, acesta poate manifesta mai puțin interes pentru continuarea studiului frontal. Dar impedimentul real este, de cele mai multe ori, lipsa timpului, astfel încât parcurgerea unora dintre activitățile propuse, hibride ca nivel, permite abordarea unor aspecte mai complexe și mai dificile la nivel intermediar. Pe de altă parte, asemenea activități pot fi cu siguranță utile și vorbitorilor nativi, care din diverse motive înregistrează deficiențe sau disfuncții de exprimare.

### **Româna pentru scopuri academice**

În cele ce urmează, pe baza unor cercetări mai vechi<sup>11</sup> și a unora recente, ilustrez orientări conceptuale și didactice ale unui mini-program de formare în domeniul menționat, care se poate derula la nivelele A2-B2 pentru a completa abordările uzuale. Părți ale acestuia își pot găsi aplicabilitate și la nivelul A1, în special dacă se exploatează, în măsura posibilului, noțiunea de inter-comprehensiune lingvistică (limbi romanice, dar și limbi deschise împrumutului, calcului productiv, ca engleza și olandeza).

### ***Supliment lexical la Nivelul Prag***

Existența unor suporturi pedagogice pentru limba engleză ca mediu de instruire / formare permite conceptualizarea unui referențial construit pe baze similare pentru limba română. Există cel puțin două seturi de liste de cuvinte specifice mediului de formare universitar sau academic pentru limba

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<sup>11</sup> În anii 2003 și 2004, în cadrul Grantului Academiei Române *Teoria și practica discursului: Tehnici de argumentare în discursul științific și critic românesc – fundamente ale dezvoltării competenței argumentative și capacității critice la nivel academic*, în colaborare cu colegii Corina Andone și Nicolae Ioana, am pus bazele disciplinei academice *Teoria și practica discursului*, ale cărei direcții de dezvoltare le-am precizat în anii următori. Am avut ocazia de a folosi perspectiva astfel conturată în cadrul cursurilor de nivel master în cadrul specializării *Teoria și practica textului*, la Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați în perioada 2003-2007 și a unor cursuri facultative de *Comunicare academică* pentru toate programele de studii.

engleză, destinate să susțină, pe de o parte, efortul de acumulare de cunoștințe al cursanților și de comunicare adecvată și performantă în scopuri academice și de formare, iar pe de altă parte, preocupările autorilor de manuale cu componentă lingvistică. Nevoia unor asemenea instrumente a apărut cu pregnanță mai ales în contextul accesului la diverse sisteme și programe de studii de nivel terțiar al unor persoane din medii sociale și etnice diferite, uneori defavorizate, pentru care limba engleză nu este totdeauna limba maternă.

Acestea pot fi parțial adaptate și folosite ca element structural în concepția de materiale suport pentru un modul didactic de limbă română ca mediu de instruire. Acesta poate fi util atât în situațiile de predare a LRLS în cadrele instituționalizate menționate (an pregătitor, lectorate din străinătate), cât și unor situații mai particulare (universități și alte instituții de învățământ terțiar din Republica Moldova, Regiunea Autonomă Găgăuzia, regiunile multilingvistice sau multietnice din România și alte țări în care se vorbește în diverse comunități și limba română). Astfel, un „lexic academic” de bază sub formă tabulară poate reprezenta un obiectiv al cercetării și inovării didactice în domeniul RLS. În lipsa unor cercetări de corpus, acesta poate fi deocamdată elaborat pe baze suficient de solide pornindu-se de la instrumentele disponibile pentru limba engleză, anume mai vechea University Word List (UWL, Xue & Nation, 1984) și mai recenta Academic Word List (AWL, Coxhead 1998a, 1998b, 2000).<sup>12</sup> Itemii lexicali pot fi ordonați alfabetic sau pe principii morfo-lexicale, exemplificate în Tabelul 2<sup>13</sup>, pe baza prelucrării și adaptării Sublistei 1 din AWL la limba română. Elementele fundamentale ale lexicului academic de bază al limbii române identificate provizoriu în cadrele didacticii LRLS pot fi prezentate ca familii de cuvinte. Acestea se diferențiază structural prin particularități care pot fi puse în evidență de autorii de suporturi didactice și de coordonatorii de cursuri de RLS prin dezvoltarea unor activități de conștientizare a aspectelor lexicale problematice. Lexemele din tabel exemplifică relații structurale simple sau complexe, atrăgând atenția didacticianului asupra dificultăților de percepție a acestor relații de către cei care învață RLS.

<sup>12</sup> The University Word List (UWL) (Xue & Nation, 1984) este o listă de 836 de cuvinte din limba engleză frecvente în texte academice, exclusiv cele 2000 de cuvinte din lista cuvintelor de uz general, General Service List (GSL, West, 1953). Lista are 11 nivele, de la nivelul 1, cuvintele cele mai frecvente folosite în texte academice, până la nivelul 11, cuvintele cel mai puțin frecvente, fiind ulterior înlocuită de AWL. The Academic Word List (AWL, Coxhead 1998a, 1998b, 2000) e un ansamblu de itemi lexicali, respectiv 570 de familii de cuvinte selectate pe baza frecvenței de apariție în comunicarea din mediul educațional terțiar, excluzând cele mai frecvente 2000 de cuvinte ale limbii engleze din GSL.

<sup>13</sup> Fig. 3 prezintă câteva secvențe ale unui instrument de lucru, un inventar al dificultăților limbii române din perspectiva didacticii limbilor străine și practicilor de comunicare în contexte profesionale și ocupaționale diverse, în curs de dezvoltare la Centrul de cercetări *Teoria și practica discursului*, Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați.

**Tabelul 2. Relații lexico-semantic și clase sintactice**

<b>a analiza</b>	<b>analizat</b>	<b>neanalizat</b>	analizabil	inanalizabil	<b>analiză</b>	<b>analize</b>	<i>analist</i>
<b>a aborda</b>	<b>abordat</b>	<b>neabordat</b>	abordabil	inabordabil	<b>abordare</b>	<b>abordări</b>	<i>analizator</i>
<b>a autoriza</b>	<b>autorizat</b>	<b>neautorizat</b>			<b>autorizare</b>	<b>autorizări</b>	
<b>a (se) baza</b>	<b>bazat</b>				<b>bază</b>	<b>baze</b>	
<b>a cerceta</b>	<b>cercetat</b>	<i>necercetat</i>			<b>cercetare</b>	<b>cercetări</b>	<i>cercetător</i>
							<i>cercetătoare</i>
<b>a distribui</b>	<b>distribuit</b>	<i>nedistribuit</i>			<b>distribuire</b>	<b>distribuiri</b>	
					<b>distribuție</b>	<b>distribuții</b>	<i>distribuitor</i>
<b>a dispune</b>	<b>dispus</b>		disponibil	indisponibil	<b>dispunere</b>	<b>dispuneri</b>	
					<b>dispoziție</b>	<b>dispoziții</b>	
<b>a presupune</b>	<b>presupus</b>	<i>nepresupus</i>			<b>presupunere</b>	<b>presupuneri</b>	
<b>a evalua</b>	<b>evaluat</b>	<i>neevaluat</i>			<b>evaluare</b>	<b>evaluări</b>	<i>evaluator</i>
<b>a identifica</b>	<b>identificat</b>	<b>neidentificat</b>			<b>identificare</b>	<b>identificări</b>	
<b>a exemplifica</b>	<b>exemplificat</b>		exemplar		<b>exemplu</b>	<b>exemple</b>	
<b>a ilustra</b>	<b>ilustrat</b>	<b>neilustrat</b>	ilustrativ		<b>ilustrare</b>	<b>ilustrări</b>	
					<b>ilustrație</b>	<b>ilustrații</b>	
					<b>arie</b>	<b>arii</b>	
					<b>domeniu</b>	<b>domenii</b>	

Abandonarea ordinii alfabetice în favoarea unui principiu structural, favorizând corelarea dintre, de exemplu, *a compune*, *a dispune*, *a presupune* poate fi o soluție, deși elementele din fiecare familie de cuvinte se organizează după modele și tipare de formare diferite.<sup>14</sup> Verbul *a dispune*, conform lexicografiei oficiale (DEX2009), împrumută modelul de creație din franceză, unde lexemul corespunzător a fost reconstituit ca împrumut și calc cu sursa în latina clasică (*disponere*, influențat de verbul *poser*, „a pune”, din lat. *pausar*, utilizat în alte creații lexicale verbale, precum fr. *déposer*, *composer*). Lexemul românesc nu este un împrumut din franceză, ci o creație originală, pe baza unui proces asemănător celui din franceză, dar nu identic, un împrumut susținut de un calc, cu puncte de plecare în franceză și în latina clasică. Verbul *a dispune* și adjectivul *disponibil*, împrumutat din franceză, sunt în relație semantică, însă nu și în relație directă de natură lexicală (derivare).

<sup>14</sup> Citez în acest sens, mai ales pentru concizie, o foarte recentă recapitulare cu privire la dinamica vocabularului: „Cuvinte și expresii / locuțiuni / sintagme noi pot intra într-o limbă naturală [...] pe două mari căi: fie preluate dintr-o altă limbă, și atunci avem de-a face cu împrumuturile lexicale (relativ) recente, numite și neologisme (...); fie create în interiorul aceleiași limbi, prin mijloace specifice (derivare cu prefixe, sufixe, compunere etc.). Se constată, în plus, nu de puține ori, că există și o treia cale inventivă de a primi zestrea lexicală a unei limbi: prin copierea, pur și simplu, a sensului cuvântului / expresiei / construcției luate ca model dintr-o altă limbă și echivalarea lui/ei cu un cuvânt (expresie, sintagmă etc.) preexistent în limba care „copiază”; procedeul se numește, cum știm, calc („copiere”) semantic.” (Franga 2020) La acestea se adaugă și calculul lexical, menționat ulterior în studiu, în cazul căruia împrumutul nu este adaptat doar fonologic și morfo-sintactic, ci suportă și influența unor procedee de derivare sau compunere din alte limbi practicate pentru alte lexeme decât cel în cauză. Evoc articolul citat și din alt motiv: el relevă o seamă întreagă de abateri de la normele lexicale și de construcție a sensului pe care le fac locutorii nativi în discursul public. Ceea ce susține ideea menționată în prezentul studiu cu privire la necesitatea reprezentării conceptuale a unor module de limbă română complementare destinate și nativilor – probabil necesare sau cel puțin utile la nivel preuniversitar.

Prezentarea din Tabelul 2 este destinată didacticienilor. Se folosesc aldine pentru itemii și formele acestora care se pretează unei introduceri progresive de la nivelul A1 până la nivelul B1 inclusiv, urmând ca la nivelele următoare, în funcție de necesități și scopuri specifice vizate, să poată fi introduse alte elemente ale unei familii de cuvinte. Totodată, competențele lingvistice în materie de vocabular și gramatică la nivelele B2-C1 permit deja utilizatorului LRLS să înțeleagă itemi noi, să îi reproducă sau să îi reconstituie pe baza regulilor și automatismelor însușite. Este de presupus că nu este necesară o prelucrare didactică a itemilor și formelor în italice. Porțiunea pe fond gri poate fi completată sau simplificată pentru uzul didactic și prezentată ca atare, în vederea percepției de către cursanți a similarităților formale și structurale, precum și a paradigmelor morfo-lexicale. În fișele elaborate se folosesc culorile pentru indicarea genurilor (albastru – masculin, roșu – feminin, violet – neutru).

Pe baza inter-comprehensiunii lingvistice, a valorificării similitudinilor lexicale dintre limbi, pot fi propuse la nivelul A1.1, spre exemplu, exerciții simple având ca obiectiv retenția lingvistică,

- a) pe baza recunoașterii și identificării sensurilor prin reconstituirea unor definiții simple:

Completați definițiile cu cuvintele potrivite: *analizele - cercetare - medicale - metodă*

Analiza este o \_\_\_\_\_ științifică de \_\_\_\_\_.

La firma noastră, \_\_\_\_\_ și testele \_\_\_\_\_ lunare sunt obligatorii.

- b) prin stimularea creativității lingvistice, pentru recuperarea unor adjective a căror formă este similară în limbi cu circulație internațională<sup>15</sup>:

Indicați adjectivul corespunzător pentru următoarele substantive:

Chimie \_\_\_\_\_ *chimic* \_\_\_\_\_ medic / medicină \_\_\_\_\_

finanțe \_\_\_\_\_ literatură \_\_\_\_\_

matematică \_\_\_\_\_ cantitate \_\_\_\_\_

gramatică \_\_\_\_\_ calitate \_\_\_\_\_

- c) prin utilizarea adjectivelor corect identificate în sintagme / colocații:

Completați cu adjectivul potrivit, ales dintre cele identificate mai sus:

analiză \_\_\_\_\_ analiză \_\_\_\_\_

analiză \_\_\_\_\_ analiză \_\_\_\_\_

analiză \_\_\_\_\_ analize \_\_\_\_\_

analize \_\_\_\_\_ analize \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>15</sup> Există riscul ca studenții să „creeze” cuvinte inexistente, dar astfel de activități sunt destinate a se derula în prezența formatorului și este indicat să fie disponibilă o cheie / soluții pentru acestea.

### ***Modulul „Exprimare academică” și vocabular***

În mod similar, dezvoltarea „vocabularului academic” poate fi urmărită la toate nivelele. Modulele de *Exprimare academică*, potrivite cu precădere studiului LRLS în anul pregătitor, au drept obiectiv formarea și dezvoltarea competențelor de comunicare în scopuri academice fără o distincție preliminară între oral și scris, aceasta putând fi abordată tangențial. În mare parte este vorba însă despre particularități ale comunicării științifice, cu distincții specifice pentru fiecare domeniu. Studiul de față se referă însă la o zonă comună, în care aceste distincții nu sunt pertinente.

În literatura de specialitate se vorbește, de exemplu, despre *limbajul științific cotidian* (*everyday scientific language*, *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache*; cf. also Völz 2015). Competențele de utilizare a acestuia nu sunt la îndemâna fiecărui vorbitor nativ<sup>16</sup>, cu atât mai puțin a vorbitorilor nenativi. Obiectivul unui asemenea modul este formarea și dezvoltarea competențelor de comunicare despre subiecte de interes cotidian din domenii diverse (științe, economie, istorie, geografie, sociologie, arte, cultură, medicină, drept, sport etc.), folosindu-se vocabular relativ specific acestora, conectori care să asigure evidențierea articulațiilor logice ale discursului și să contribuie la coerența ansamblului, precum și acte de limbaj adecvate solicitării, transmiterii și prelucrării de cunoștințe în domeniul vizat.

Ca subiecte propuse, indiferent de domeniul de interes academic al studentului (potențial) pot fi muzica, literatura, percepțiile (simțurile – vederea, auzul, gustul), spațiile de lucru, fotografia, monarhia, sănătatea, energia, feminismul, comunicarea (verbală și non-verbală). Tipurile de documente, adaptate sau autentice – de preferat, în măsura în care drepturile de autor o permit – sunt extrem de diverse, din categoria textelor adresate publicului larg: articole de revistă de divertisment și informare, interviu (în presa scrisă, internet, radio), pagini de internet, grafice, statistici, articol de revistă specializată (ex. decorațiuni interioare), fapt divers, recenzie / prezentare de carte, editorial, comentarii pro și contra (postări în spațiul virtual Internet – platforme sociale), scrisori de candidatură, motivație, broșură, pliant, reclame publicitare, organigrame, ghid turistic, articol enciclopedic, mesaje e-mail.

O unitate didactică tipică constă în activități lingvistice dedicate, pentru a crea deprinderi cu privire la elemente de vocabular specifice, operații

<sup>16</sup> A se vedea seriile de articole sau rubricile din revistele culturale (la care contribuie, de exemplu, lingviști precum Liviu Franga, Rodica Zafiu) în care sunt identificate numeroase exprimări greșite sau defectuoase ale nativilor. Atât gramatica, cât și vocabularul sunt afectate, iar creațiile și inovațiile lexicale neconforme cu spiritul limbii se datorează, printre altele, și unei insuficiente atenții îndreptate în programele preuniversitare către exprimarea liberă, în public, pe teme mai variate decât cele literare. Este și motivul pentru care astfel de activități și module pot fi considerate / acceptate drept repere și în formarea lingvistică a nativilor.



de transformare lexico-semantică, structurare textuală. Exemplele de mai jos sunt indicative, fiind susținute de ilustrări ale unor posibile actualizări pe bază de text:

1. Discursul indirect – explicitarea actelor de limbaj; distanțarea locutorului de (opinia exprimată de) enunțatorul original (condiționalul de incertitudine, practicat în stilul jurnalistic)
2. Descrieri, explicații, comentarii

Exemplu: **Descrierea și comentarea unor reprezentări grafice**

Vocabular specific: imagine, grafic, diagramă, infografic, chestionar, reprezentare grafică  
cifre, date, rezultate; procent – procentual, număr / numeric; respondenți

Tipuri de diagrame: diagramă / grafic de tip linie / bară / lumânare  
diagramă cu sectoare circulare  
cu (grupuri de) bare verticale / orizontale ...  
cu linii / cu bare pozitive și negative / suprapuse

- a. Tema: Imaginea / Graficul / Diagrama (re)prezintă / arată ...  
Reprezentarea grafică redă rezultatele ...
- b. Sursa / Surse: Datele sunt / au fost obținute / preluate din ...  
Graficul / Diagrama este preluată din ...
- c. Intervalul de timp:  
Chestionarul a fost aplicat unui număr de ... respondenți în perioada ...
- d. Metoda / Modalitatea de colectare a datelor:  
Cifrele / Datele au fost obținute în cadrul unui sondaj / studiu despre ...
- e. Conținutul: Diagrama / Graficul de tip linie / bară / lumânare prezintă rezultatele ...  
Diagrama cu sectoare circulare  
cu (grupuri de) bare verticale / orizontale ...  
cu linii  
cu bare pozitive și negative / suprapuse  
Rezultatele sunt redată numeric / procentual ...  
Semnificația ...  
...% dintre respondenți spun / declară / resping ...

Subiectele de discuție, menite să asigure exprimarea orală sau în scris, pot fi plasate în întâmpinarea unei teme sau la finalul unei unități didactice și grupate – foarte general – conform următoarelor perspective:

- a) Care este rolul / semnificația / importanța ...XXX... în viața de zi cu zi / în economie / în dezvoltarea copilului / în societățile democratice ...?
- b) Ce informații vi se par banale / cunoscute / noi / neașteptate?
- c) Explicați ce înțelegeți prin ...
- d) Citiți titlul textului / Priviți ilustrațiile care însoțesc textul și faceți ipoteze înainte de a-l citi. Despre ce e vorba?

Activitățile de comunicare bazate pe introducerea structurilor lingvistice specifice au drept scop producerea unor secvențe de discurs oral sau scris reprezentând diverse categorii:

- rezumat de text – a. din perspectiva autorului; b. cu punerea în evidență a opiniei autorului textului original ca viziune posibilă;
- sinteza de text – compararea mai multor puncte de vedere prin rezumare cu privire la același subiect;
- realizarea de analogii – permițând compararea și stabilirea asemănărilor și deosebirilor;
- descrierea și comentarea graficelor și tabelelor – tipuri de grafice, diagrame, tabele, expresii uzuale.

Taxonomia și tipologia activităților didactice de dezvoltare și utilizare a vocabularului nu reprezintă un ansamblu închis, acestea fiind în directă conexiune cu dezvoltarea competențelor gramaticale. Dintre categoriile de activități recomandate în acest scop, se pot aminti:

- formarea substantivelor din verbe: sufixe specifice pentru substantive nume de acțiune și nume de rezultat (nominalizarea verbului ), eventual cu exerciții de reformulare; de exemplu:

*Completați cu substantivul adecvat obținut de la verbul indicat între paranteze. Folosiți sufixele –(a)ție, –(a)re.*

În fizică, \_\_\_\_\_ arată cât de rapid se modifică în timp viteza unui mobil. (a accelera)

Când vine vorba de alimentație și menținerea unei greutate normale, se vorbește adesea despre posibilitatea de \_\_\_\_\_ a metabolismului.

Unde este pedala de \_\_\_\_\_?

Americanii calcă \_\_\_\_\_: Ford Craiova produce o mașină la 67 de secunde și un motor la 42 de secunde.

- formarea substantivelor din adjective și verbe (nominalizarea verbului și adjectivului), cu exerciții de reformulare, ca în:

*Reformulați următoarea frază:*

Poliția a intervenit violent. Manifestanții s-au împrăștiat.

\_\_\_\_\_ poliției i-a făcut pe manifestanți să se împrăștie.

Manifestanții s-au împrăștiat din cauza \_\_\_\_\_.

Alte strategii utile în predarea LRLS sunt identificarea cuvintelor cheie în text și organizarea acestora în câmpuri lexico-semantic, înțelegerea cuvintelor din context, identificarea de informații pe Internet cu ajutorul unor cuvinte-cheie, elaborarea unui *mindmap* (infografice / infodiagrame), constituirea (adică identificarea) unor familii de cuvinte.

## Orientări

Tipurile de activități ilustrate în studiul de față pot fi extinse la unele categorii de grupuri țintă a căror limbă maternă este româna. Astfel, în parcursul preuniversitar, astfel de secvențe pot fi abordate în cadrul opționalilor socio-umane, contribuind la fundamentarea competențelor de exprimare în vederea examenului național de bacalaureat și pregătind publicul din sistemul preuniversitar pentru exercitarea unor ocupații sau o formare academică. Ele contribuie atât la dezvoltarea competențelor de română pentru obiective universitare, cât și a celor de română pentru scopuri academice. În anul pregătitor, corelate cu modulele de exprimare orală, conversație și vocabular specific administrației universitare, secvențe ca cele prezentate în continuare au ca obiect pregătirea viitorilor studenți pentru prelucrarea conținuturilor specifice diverselor tipuri de discipline universitare. În cadrul formării academice, în care asemenea module sunt de dorit, parcurgerea unor secvențe de tipul celor ilustrate permite o prezentare adecvată a problematicii asociate exprimării în scris și orale în scopuri universitare și academice (prezentarea rezultatelor cercetării prin elaborarea și susținerea lucrărilor de licență, master, doctorat).

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### ***III. Lingvistică teoretică și aplicată***



# A Relational Approach to Bilingual Processing<sup>1</sup>

PAUL BUZILĂ<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract.** The way in which bilinguals process linguistic information has received increasing attention in the last decades. Several models have been proposed since Weinreich (1953/1974) laid the foundations of language contact studies. This paper reviews those models and pinpoints the main features that grant them certain explanatory capabilities, such as stratification, connectivity and distributed representation of linguistic elements. It then advocates for the adoption of the neurocognitive model known as Relational Network Theory (Lamb 1999) which, we argue, has an even higher explanatory power due to the fact that it brings together those features and adds other important ones such as the purely relational nature of the system, the abundance hypothesis and proximity principle and the implementation in relational terms of Hebbian learning. The theory itself is briefly presented and we offer some examples on how it was used to represent concepts and their relationships with the linguistic system in monolinguals, and then apply the same model to bilingualism, showing how distinct languages would be represented in such a relational network account.

**Keywords:** *language contact, bilingualism, neurocognitive linguistics, Relational Network Theory.*

## Models of language processing in bilinguals

The fact that the language faculty resides in the brain has been well established, at least ever since Broca's (1861) and Wernike's (1874) classical observations related to the 'articulation' and 'comprehension' centers (as cited in Ijalba et al., 2013). Both findings were based on clinical studies focused on patients with different forms of aphasia, which set the basis of what we now call neurolinguistics. Given the fact that the early developments of the field happened in Europe, where bilingualism was common, concerns about the relationship between these early findings and the system of bilingual speakers appeared shortly after (Ijalba et al., 2013). The main question that needed an answer was this: Does the brain provide separate

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memory stores for each language or do they share the same system? One of the first models, based on observations that recovery of different languages was not uniform in bilingual individuals, stated that each language had a separate brain representation, or language center, and therefore, recovery was determined in accordance with which language centers were disrupted (Scoresby-Jackson 1867 as cited in Ijalba et al., 2013). This view was soon opposed by arguments showing the improbability of such a model. Pitres (1895/1953 as cited in Ijalba et al., 2013) argued that each language would need at least four centers in the brain: two for reception of auditory and visual images and two motor centers for producing phonetic and visual images. Thus, it would be highly improbable for a brain incident to damage all those centers in such a coordinated fashion. Switching from a neuroanatomical perspective to an analysis of the functional quality of the disorder, he could observe that recovery was typically gradual, with understanding returning before speaking, and the more familiar language returning before the less familiar one. Therefore, he considered that “a polyglot’s languages were not organized in distinct brain areas, but rather were part of a common, or shared neural network built upon the speaker’s experience with the language(s)” (Ijalba et al., 2013). This ‘common store’ was the mainstream approach for decades to come, but it did not address the question of internal organization of such a system, i.e. how was linguistic information organized and processed in the brain of a bilingual person?

One of the first models was offered at the very beginning of language contact research by Weinreich (1953/1974, pp. 8-10) who set the scene for the next decades during which psycholinguistics stepped-in and provided a number of different models that offered testable predictions and explained more or less satisfactorily the patterns of linguistic behavior observed in bilinguals. It is not the aim of this section to extensively present all these models. Our intention is to contrast their main features to the neurocognitive model which, we suggest, can be more successful in representing a bilingual cognitive system. Therefore, we will focus on a series of properties that many of these models share and which, we claim, are exactly the elements that contributed to their success. We will then see to what extent these features are also to be found in the Relational Network Theory (RNT) model.

The main property that is shared by possibly all the models of bilingual processing is their stratification. Most models make a distinction between at least two subsystems: one of form and one of content. In general, this contrast refers to the two distinct levels of lexical information (lexicon) and semantic or conceptual content (meaning). Even when the distinction is not explicitly formulated in these terms, the main idea is maintained. Weinreich (1953/1974, p. 8) uses the classical distinction between signified

and signifier (Saussure, 1916/1995), while the Dual-coding model postulates a separation between an “image system” and a “verbal system” (Paivio and Desrochers, 1980), but it is obvious that they both refer to the same notion of separation between lexical form and semantic content. Most of the other models explicitly refer to a lexicon and a semantic level or system. In general, the common assumption is that there is just one conceptual store, and the debate is around whether there are distinct lexicons for each language or if there is a shared one, and, if the former is true, what are the relationships between these distinct lexicons and between the lexicons and the conceptual system. Potter et al. (1984), for example, assumes the existence of distinct lexicons and offers two possibilities: a concept mediation model, in which the two languages operate independently of each other because lexicons are independently connected to the conceptual memory store, and a word association model in which the two languages interact at the lexical level, based on translation equivalents. Generally known as hierarchical models, these were further developed in the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM), which maintains the same “separate lexicons” approach, but presents a more sophisticated way of connecting them to the conceptual memory store, in such a way that concept mediation and word association are not two alternatives any more, but different routes within the same model (Kroll and Stewart, 1994). On the other hand, the Bilingual Interactive Activation (BIA) model makes it clear that there is only one integrated lexicon, which allows simultaneous activation of word representations in both languages (Van Heuven and Dijkstra, 1998). The BIA model expands the idea of stratification to “lower levels” containing letters, and even lower level features. Without going into further details, we’ll retain the main idea of stratified levels interconnected in a hierarchical fashion. With very few exceptions, the other existing models implicitly assume or explicitly postulate the existence of at least two distinct levels, or strata therefore, for simplicity we will call this feature ‘stratification’.

The second feature which is present in most of the models might be referred to in general terms as ‘connectivity’: the idea that the different levels of the system and the elements within the same level are connected in one way or another. As mentioned before, the difference between models relies many times on the kind of connections they posit and the way in which levels are connected between them. Whereas the RHM explains the difference between L1 and L2 as a result of different strengths of connections between the two lexicons and the semantic level, the Distributed Representation Model (DRM) explains it in terms of different number of connections between a lexical element and the conceptual ones (De Groot, 1992). The successive versions of the DRM rely all on the idea that elements of the system are

connected in such a way that they can influence each other. Some models, such as the original BIA model or Green's (1998) Inhibitory Control Model (ICM), are very explicit about connectivity and differentiate between excitatory and inhibitory connections. In general, all these models can be said to be connectionist in nature, in a loose meaning of the term. And some of them are actually derived from genuine connectionist models<sup>3</sup>.

Finally, a third important property, which we have already mentioned while analyzing the other two, but which is not present in all the models, is the distributed nature of the linguistic representations that different models refer to. One could also argue that in the compound model of bilingualism presented by Weinreich, and reiterated by other models, a signified (conceptual element) has a distributed representation at a lexical level (two different signifiers), but the concept is only fully exploited by the family of models linked to the original Distributed Representation Model (DRM), mentioned in the previous paragraph. De Groot (1992) showed that the similarity between two words (from the same language or from two distinct languages) depends on the number of conceptual elements (nodes) to which the two words are connected. Furthermore, by combining this model with the previous RHM, Duyck and Brysbaert (2004) accounted for a wide range of experimental effects: the bilingual concreteness effect (concrete words being recalled or processed faster than abstract words), differences and similarities between words across languages, the relationship between false cognates, etc. Further developments of the model (Schoonbaert et al., 2009; Van Hell and De Groot, 1998) have shown the great advantage of considering linguistic information as having a distributed representation within the linguistic system.

Summarizing this short overview of the most important models of bilingual processing, we claim that the most important features that made these models successful in answering some of the questions related to how bilinguals process language are: stratification, connectivity, and distributed representations. A model that manages to observe all of them should, in principle, have an even higher explanatory power. It is obvious by now that our claim will be that the Relational Network Theory (RNT) does exactly that. We will explain in detail how RNT accommodates all these features.

## Language processing in RNT

Neurocognitive linguistics makes an important distinction between linguistic production and the system that lies behind and is responsible for it, and it specifically states that it is interested in the latter. The full details of the theory

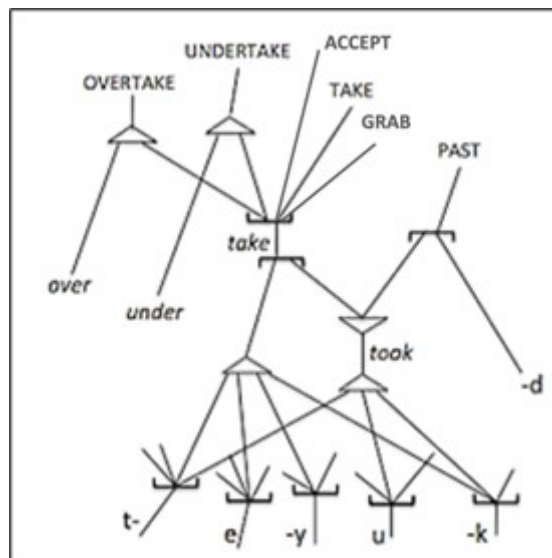
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<sup>3</sup> The BIA model is based on the connectionist monolingual Interactive Activation Model (McClelland and Rumelhart 1981).

are presented in Lamb (1999) and updated in Lamb (2016). Here, we will briefly look at an example of how linguistic information is represented in this model. This example will help us illustrate the three main features we have just identified in other models plus a series of additional features that situate RNT on an even better position for explaining language processing in bilinguals.

RNT postulates that the entire linguistic system of a person is a network of relations, consisting of nodes and lines. In order to represent that, a new notation system was elaborated (Lamb, 1966/1999). Figure 1 is an example of how several types of linguistic information can be represented in RNT notation.

The very first thing that can be observed in this figure is that it does not represent the structure of a certain word (*take*), but the underlying relational structure that could account for the possible production of that word and several other related ones within a perception-production system. The diagram contains three types of elements: lines, nodes, and tags.



**Fig. 1.** The lexeme take in RNT notation (adapted from Lamb 2016)

There is only one type of lines and, in this abstract version of the notation<sup>4</sup>, they are bidirectional, which means that activation flows in both ways, so that such a diagram could account for both production and reception

<sup>4</sup> Lamb (1999) makes the distinction between compact (later called abstract) notation, which uses AND and OR nodes and bidirectional lines, and narrow notation, a more detailed one, which reveals the internal structure of compact nodes and has unidirectional lines. Lamb (2016) also refers to a third, even more detailed notation, which would depict networks down to the level of neocortical columns (Montcastle 1998: 165-203).

of linguistic information. Lines are responsible for carrying activation from one node to another. Nodes will allow activation to pass or not, depending on their type. There are two types of nodes: AND nodes (represented as triangles) and OR nodes (represented as horizontal square brackets). These two types are the network implementation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. Finally, tags are used to make the diagram readable, but they do not belong to the network.

Figure 1 depicts some of the relationships involved in the perception or production of what one might call the lexeme *take*. It is known from structural linguistics that this lexeme is realized as the sequence of a consonant sound [t], followed by the diphthong [eɪ] and a final consonant [k] (represented, for simplicity, as letters in the original diagram). The AND node, below and slightly to the left of the tag *take*, conveys this information by showing the downward lines going out of different places at the bottom of the node, suggesting their successive, rather than simultaneous, activation. This representation can be read in both directions: in order to produce the lexeme *take*, activation has to be sent successively to the 4 phonemes, or the other way round, whenever the 4 phonemes are heard in this succession, they activate the lexeme *take*, which is being perceived. This way of representing linguistic information relies at the same time on all three features that we mentioned in the previous section. It is a **stratified** account, as we are distinguishing between a conceptual level (meanings), a lexemic level and a phonetic one; it depends on **connections** between the levels to send activation from one node to another; and it conceives of the element of the system as **distributed representations**. This last feature can be understood in two ways. A narrow understanding is the one in which an element at one level has a distributed representation at the next neighboring level. In this perspective, one can say that the lexeme *take* has a distributed phonetic representation at the lower level or a semantic distributed representation at the upper level. The second, and more realistic way of understanding the distributiveness of the model, is to look at the lexeme as the totality of all lines and nodes that get activated when that central node is active. It has been pointed out that one of the problems of other models resided exactly in trying to conceive of a linguistic unit either as a local or as a distributed representation when in reality both are valid. There is one node dedicated to the lexeme *take*, but what that lexeme represents is a large network of many nodes in different layers, connected to that node (Lamb, 2016). Consequently, we can think of the lexeme being located at the level of that particular node (there is no other node “dedicated” to that lexeme), but the real value of the lexeme relies on semantic and phonetic information as well, therefore only the whole subnetwork will give the whole picture.

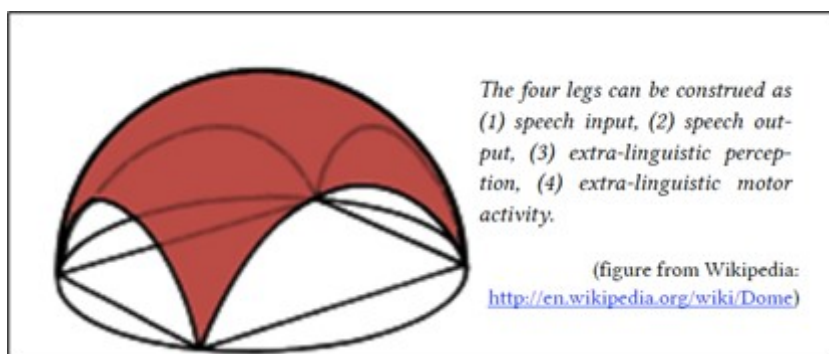
The same type of reasoning works at any location of the network. If we focus our attention on the upper<sup>5</sup> level, relative to the lexeme, all tags are in capital letters, a convention for representing conceptual meanings. The lexeme *take* is connected to this level via an OR node, which means that only one of the lines above it will be activated, so that only one of the possible meanings of *take* (GRAB, ACCEPT...) will be acknowledged. The diagram also points to the fact that the same lexeme is used for conveying other meanings for whose activation the contribution of other lexemes would also be needed (*overtake*, *undertake*). As just mentioned above, the semantic representation of the lexeme *take* is also a distributed one. In other words, this notation can easily explain “standard” phenomena such as composite realizations (the realization of the lexeme as a series of phonemes) or polysemy (the lexeme having multiple meanings). The diagram captures the way in which RNT represents other phenomena as well, for example the production of the past form *took*, which is a so-called *portmanteau* realization, typical for irregular forms. This is represented in relational networks by an AND node which this time is upside down, as it has more lines coming from above (from concepts) and only one going downwards (towards expression). This means that this node will only get activated if it receives activation from both the lexeme *take* and the conceptual information of past. In that case, it will activate downwards another subnetwork for the activation of the sounds [t], [u] and [k].

As mentioned earlier, it is not the purpose of this paper to exhaustively present all the details of this approach, hence we will not explain every detail of the diagram. Instead, it is more useful to pinpoint some other general properties of relational networks, made clear by this notation system. One of the main findings of the theory is the fact that there are **no linguistic units** within the system. Although there are “name tags” beside each node in Figure 1, they do not belong to the system and are there for the mere readability of the diagram. If removed, the system continues to function in the same way it has been explained. Therefore, the system only consists of nodes and lines through which activation gets propagated. Of course, there must be some interfaces with other systems where activation leaves the linguistic system. Indeed, towards expression, phonemes are realized as combinations of distinctive features and further on, the features are realized as combinations of muscle contractions, at which point activation enters another system, the muscular one. In the other direction, things are more complex, but the core tenet is that, at the upper limit, the system interfaces with what could generally be called the conceptual system.

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Up’ and ‘down’ are, of course, notation conventions, with lower direction pointing towards expression and upper direction pointing towards meaning.

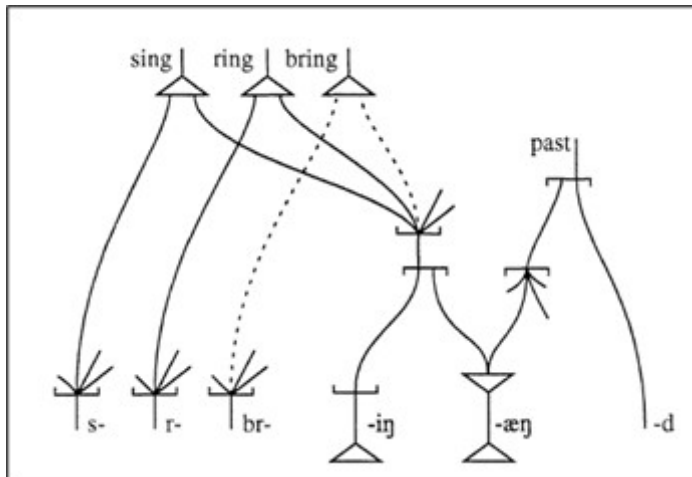
In RNT, the conceptual structure is not entirely linguistic as it connects both with linguistic and non-linguistic subnetworks. For example, a concept such as DOG is connected through a lexemic node to the subnetwork responsible for the production of the phonetic sequence [d ɔ g], but it must be connected to a similar subnetwork which has at its top the visual image of a dog and to another subnetwork having at the top the acoustic “image” of barking, and so on. All these subnetworks should be connected to a central node at the very top of the structure which would be the multimodal conceptual node DOG. Lamb (2016) conceives the meaning system as a dome, with the four legs representing (1) speech input, (2) speech output, (3) extra-linguistic perception and (4) extra-linguistic motor activity (Figure 2, overleaf). Bottom line, RNT posits that there are no linguistic units in the system and that, at the same time, there are no discernible boundaries either anywhere within the cognitive system (Lamb, 2016). From this point of view, RNT has an overtly non-modular view of the linguistic system and of the overall cognitive system in general, contrary to the classic view of Fodor (1983/2008). Any cognitive phenomena are thus explained in terms of how different parts of the large relational network are interconnected and how activation spreads through it.



*Fig. 2. The conceptual dome (Lamb 2016)*

There is another feature of relational networks that differentiates RNT. Although the overall architecture of the system is innate, the actual wiring is extremely dynamic, accounting for the high amount of learning that people can do during their lives. The discussion is rather long, but it can be summarized by briefly mentioning the pillars on which this idea sits, which were called the **abundance hypothesis** and the **proximity principle** (Lamb 1999: 212-214, 217-218). The abundance hypothesis proposes that, at any point, nodes in the network have many latent connections to many, although not to all, nodes in neighboring levels, and as activation takes certain paths

repeatedly, certain connections and certain paths are strengthened and become dedicated, according to the Hebbian principle of nodes that fire together wire together (Shatz 1992). The opposite is also true, pathways which hardly ever receive activation get weaker in time. The proximity principle states (simplifying things to a certain degree) that a node dedicated to integrating features represented by other nodes, will most likely be in an intermediate location to those. Besides that, any connection within the system is **bidirectional**, so activation in one direction will always trigger a feedback activation of the same pathway in the other direction, which contributes to strengthening it via a Hebbian process. There is strong evidence from neuroscience for the abundance theory (Edelman 1987, 1989 as cited in Lamb 2016), the proximity principle (Mountcastle 1998: 165-203) and the bidirectionality of connections<sup>6</sup> (Pulvermüller 2002 as cited in García et al. 2017: 69).



**Fig. 3.** *New connections being strengthened for the production of the erroneous past form \*brang as an analogy with sang, rang (from Lamb 1999:212)*

In more operational terms, the way in which a new piece of linguistic information is acquired will be explained in terms of establishing new connections within the system, i.e. strengthening certain latent connections to the point they become dedicated to processing that particular piece of information. This account explains not only regular learning, but also the

<sup>6</sup> Bidirectionality refers to how two parts of the system are interconnected, not to the connection fibers *per se* (lines in RNT notation). The neurological reality is that connection fibers (axons) are unidirectional. This is plausibly reflected in the more detailed notation system called narrow notation (Lamb 2016) which posits only one type of node and unidirectional lines.



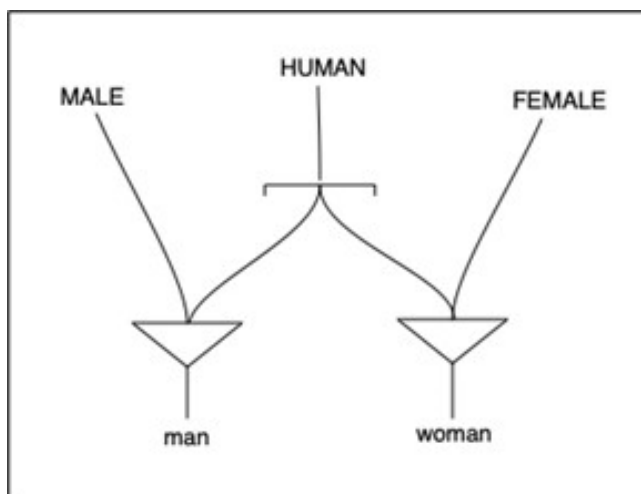
production of typical errors observed in language acquisition such as analogies. Figure 3 depicts such a case.

It is important to observe that the lexeme *sing* and *ring* are both connected to the same phonological node representing the rime of these one syllable phonological words which only differ in their onset consonant, [s] and [r]. However, that rime-node to which they are connected (the upward, unordered OR node approximately in the middle of the diagram) is not yet a phonological node, it only represents a virtual rime which can actually take two forms, depending on the conceptual information of time/tense being expressed. That is why, the path branches again downwards, via a downward ordered OR node, towards the actual phonological nodes for the two actual rimes [iŋ] or [æŋ]. Now, this is very important because any other lexeme that will connect at phonetical level to at least one syllable with the same rime [iŋ] will connect actually to that upward OR node first, which means that it connects to the whole subnetwork containing both phonetical nodes for [iŋ] and [æŋ]. According to the abundance hypothesis there are plenty of latent nodes and lines available in this vicinity. According to the proximity principle, a node to integrate the two phonological nodes for the onset cluster [br] and the rime [iŋ] will be “selected” from this vicinity. Thus, we get the node for the lexeme *bring* in the medium upper part of the diagram. Its connections downwards are only slightly stronger than the latent ones but they are strengthened with every use of the corresponding phonetic word [brɪŋ]. And since the lexeme is connected to the same upward OR node (which branches downwards for [iŋ] and [æŋ]), the first time when this part of the network receives activation from both the lexeme *bring* and the conceptual node PAST, the phonetic form [bræŋ] will be produced, due to how the network is wired. Of course, this does not mean that this hypothetical speaker will always pronounce the erroneous form. What usually happens is that, in time, speakers learn the correct form and inhibit the “old” pathway, which will gradually fade away.

Let us summarize. We argue that RNT as a model of language processing not only clusters all those features that other models had only selectively, but introduces several others, which grant the model a higher explanatory power. These features are: stratification, connectivity, both local and distributed representation of information, absence of linguistic objects (no units, but nodes and lines) and flexibility (based on the abundance hypothesis and the proximity principle). We also claim that all these features will more readily represent language in a bilingual system. We will try to see how RNT can do that in the next section.

## Bilingual processing in RNT

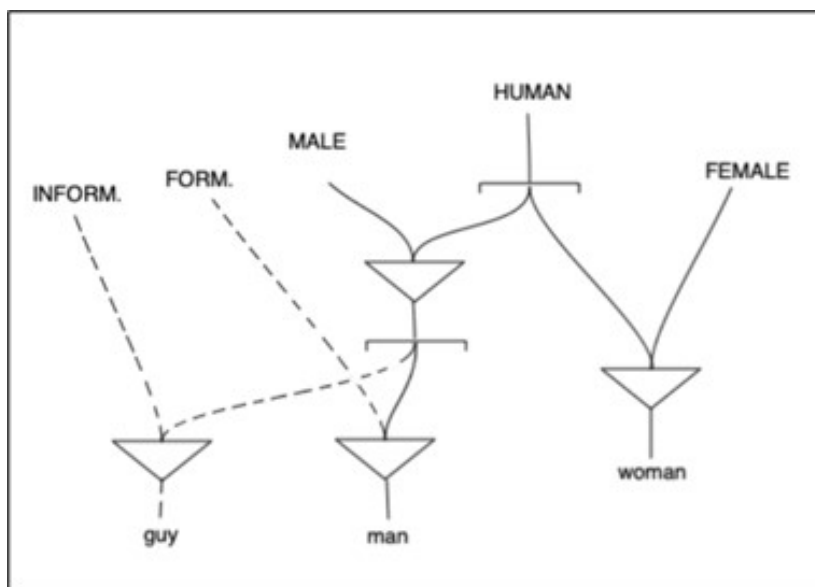
It is intuitive to assume that a bilingual has the possibility to choose between at least two (equivalent) forms, each belonging to one of the languages he or she speaks. Therefore, it is most probably a matter of paradigmatic choice. We have already mentioned that paradigmatic relationships are implemented in RNT as OR nodes. We need, however, to clarify the way in which OR nodes function in selecting alternatives. We have mentioned briefly that the selection is triggered by the context, but we need to specify how this context is represented in relational networks. Hence, if we take a typical example of lexical choice, we would represent the way in which the system selects between the two lexemes assigned to human beings, *man* and *woman*, depending on gender information. We can represent *man* and *woman* as having a distributed semantic representation based on nuclear meanings, such as HUMAN, MALE and FEMALE (considering the information associated to these MALE and FEMALE nodes as semantic or grammatical in nature – i.e. MASC. and FEM. – is irrelevant for this discussion).



**Fig. 4.** Lexical selection based on additional activation coming from conceptual nodes

Figure 4 makes it clear that selection does not occur at the OR node level, which actually lets the activation coming from HUMAN pass to both lines going downwards, but at the next level, where lexical nodes need additional activation in order to be activated. And since, in a given situation, either MALE or FEMALE node will be active, lexical selection will occur successfully based on this additional activation.

We can say that this is a typical lexical selection based on semantic features, just as in De Groot's (1992) DRM model. There are however many cases in which the difference between two lexical alternatives is not easy to point in terms of semantic features. For example, what are the semantic features differentiating a *man* from a *guy*? There might be several answers, but in most cases we will agree that such things as the intention of the speaker, the situational context (formal, informal) or the status of the interlocutor (friend, unknown person, professor, etc.) will all interact in driving this selection. These are not purely linguistic aspects, but according to RNT they will have a mental representation similar to the linguistic information, that is, in the form of relational networks. That is why, however complicated the subnetwork of relations accounting for the "feeling" of informality might be, it must be connected to a conceptual node meaning just that. And that node will have connections to many linguistic subnetworks. From this point of view, then, such a node will represent both conceptual and contextual information. The node INFORM. in Figure 5 is situated at the conceptual level but it is activated from activation coming from other modalities, such as visual and auditory perception, more precisely from the subnetworks located in the systems representing the visual and auditory information of an informal setting. Therefore, the node is conceptual in nature, but it is linked to contextual information.



**Fig. 5.** Lexical selection based on additional activation coming from contextual nodes

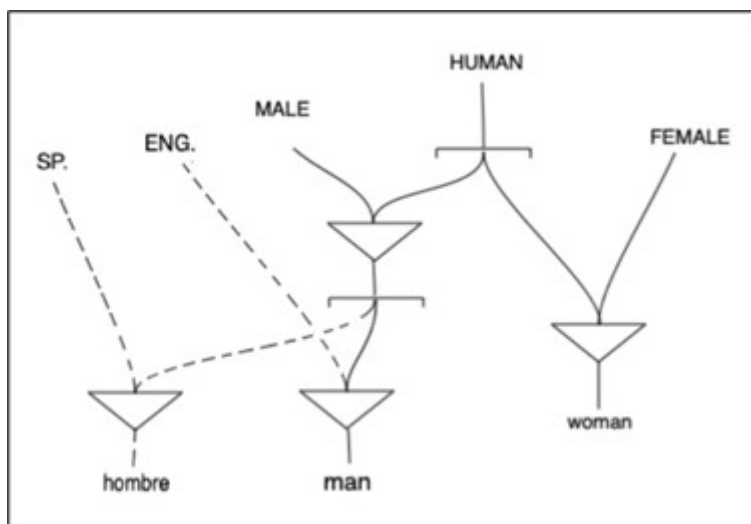
In this case, the activation of the lexical node *guy* does not depend only on the semantic features HUMAN and MALE, but also on the contextual information representing informal setting. In a certain way, these nodes seem to have exactly the kind of switching function that Task Schemas have in the BIA+ model (Dijkstra and van Heuven, 2002). The only difference is that the RNT model clarifies how such a device might actually function in making the selection. This model also shows how new linguistic information — in this case, a new word — can be accommodated by an already existing structure, just like it is the case in real life linguistic learning. What Figure 5 shows, ultimately, is the learning of the word *guy* with its semantic and pragmatic meanings.

Both the *man-woman* and *man-guy* examples represent what might be going on in a monolingual system, but we are interested in understanding if a bilingual system can work in a similar way. Let us assume that, besides making the semantic difference between *man* and *woman* and being able to use in a pragmatically correct way *man* and *guy*, our speaker can also successfully use, in the right situations, the words *man* and *hombre*. Is it feasible to assume that it is likewise a lexical selection task that the speaker successfully performs, just as in the other cases? And if yes, what kind of mechanism would allow that?

Figure 6 shows that the same type of mechanism successfully models learning and lexical selection even when one of the lexical elements belongs to another language. And that is possible because there is no lexical element at all, in fact. As explained before, *man* and *hombre* are just tags we place on the diagram to make it easier to read but they do not belong to the network. There are only nodes and lines in the network. It is true that, intuitively, we “feel” a difference between English and Spanish, but that is just another form<sup>7</sup> of linguistic illusions (Lamb, 1999, pp. 273-292). Languages are mental constructs just like any other, and are fundamentally represented in the cognitive system by a conceptual node. In real life, the difference between two languages seems to be something else than the difference between formal and informal situations, but they are really just conceptual information connected to any subnetwork of the linguistic system and, therefore, activating the production of any of the linguistic forms. Consequently, the tags SP. and ENG. in figure 6 are the same type of conceptual/contextual nodes like FORM. and INFORM. in figure 5, providing additional activation for a selection to be made successfully.

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<sup>7</sup> The main one being the illusion of a system composed of linguistic units.



**Fig. 6.** Lexical selection based on language nodes

In RNT, there are no different languages with different locations or representations in the linguistic system of a person. A language is just the multitude of nodes and lines which are connected to one conceptual node representing the concept of that language, just like any other network representation. Moreover, according to the proximity principle, it is more plausible that the central node for *hombre* should be located in the vicinity of *man* rather than somewhere else, together with other “Spanish” words, e.g. *concupiscencia* (‘concupiscence’). It is not plausible that languages are stored differently and in different parts of the system. Rather, the way in which these subnetworks are connected to produce certain linguistic outcomes when those contextual/language nodes are active, creates the illusion of different languages. For example, the lexemic node *hombre* with its subnetwork for the phonetic production, “feels” Spanish because it is linked to the conceptual node SP. just as many other lexemic nodes are. The repeated activation of all those pathways connected to SP. give us the feeling that there is such a thing as the Spanish language, but at the individual level it is just one node of the system to which many other nodes are connected.

## Conclusions

This paper offered a review of the most important models of bilingual processing and pinpointed the main features on which those models are selectively based: language stratification, connectivity of linguistic elements and distributed representation of linguistic units. It, then, argued that the neurocognitive approach to language, known as Relational Network Theory,

does not only observe all those features but it also relies on additional ones, which grant the model a higher explanatory capability. The additional features are the purely relational nature of linguistic units (no units, only nodes and lines), the abundance hypothesis and proximity principle, which together explain how a Hebbian learning process is implemented in RNT. These features account for the dynamic aspect of the system that allows learning.

The relational account of a cognitive system reveals the fact that there are no clear boundaries between language and the other cognitive systems and it also shows that bilingual processing is just another type of information processing along relational pathways of activation. Distinct languages *per se* are just an illusion emerging from the way in which certain modulating nodes function in lexical selection tasks.

We suggest that this model should be used to explain a wide range of linguistic phenomena observed in bilinguals, which are still challenging when approached by other models.

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All original diagrams produced using the NuroLab application:

Tisher, Gordon. (2010). *Neurocognitive Linguistics Laboratory*. [version 1.2.1.] Copyright © 2010-2011. <<https://bitbucket.org/kulibali/neurocogling/wiki/Home>> [28.02.2020]

# Discipline-specific Metadiscourse Markers in ESP Expert Writing in Political Science

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**Abstract:** Several studies have used discipline-specific corpora to determine disciplinary writing norms, as well as rhetorical and linguistic features. Few, however, have focused on the discipline of Political Science. This paper investigates the use of lexical bundles representing metadiscourse markers in three types of corpora in the discipline of Political Science. First, lexical bundles as metadiscourse markers are identified in expert texts written in English L1, after which the same is done for writing in Romanian L1 in the same discipline. The results of this contrastive endeavor help assess the degree of Anglicization of Political Science writing in an L2 English corpus containing texts by expert writers whose L1 is Romanian. Discipline-specific inter-language interference of L1 Romanian into L2 writing in English is thus revealed. Several pedagogical recommendations for teaching writing in ESP classes taught at Romanian universities are made based on the results of the corpus analyses.

**Keywords:** *discipline-specific corpora, English for Specific Purposes, inter-language interference, L2 English, Political Science.*

## Introduction

Writing in the disciplines (WID) or Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) has a tradition that dates back to the American academic context of the 1980s (Bazerman, 1991, p. 209), when the necessity of discipline-specific writing pedagogy was first recognized, especially in ESP and EAP settings. It was then foregrounded that writing norms, registers, and genres, as well as language, differ from discipline to discipline (Russell, 2002), and each field has its own discourse community (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2008). Since then, several studies have used discipline-specific corpora to investigate linguistic and rhetorical features of academic texts in different disciplines (e.g. Hyland, 2000; Hyland, 2008; Kuteeva, 2013; Stoller & Robinson, 2013; Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino, 2015; Staples, 2015; Tessuto, 2015; Gray, 2015; Boettger, 2016; Reppen & Olson, 2020). While some studies have focused on

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the social sciences in general, or on other disciplines in the social sciences like, few have analyzed the case of Political Science (e.g. Charles, 2006; Charles, 2007). Furthermore, none have analyzed frequently used lexical bundles in Political Science writing.

The present paper aims to fill this research gap by investigating the use of lexical bundles representing metadiscourse markers in four types of corpora in the discipline of Political Science. First, I identify lexical bundles as metadiscourse markers in expert texts written in English L1, after which I do the same for writing in Romanian L1 in the same discipline. The results of this contrastive endeavor helped me assess the degree of Anglicization of Political Science writing in L2 English texts by expert writers whose L1 is Romanian. I thus reveal the discipline-specific inter-language interference of L1 Romanian into L2 writing in English and make pedagogical recommendations for teaching writing in ESP classes taught at Romanian universities.

## Methods and Data

The first corpus analyzed, Political Science Expert English Corpus (PSE), contains 50 research articles (RA) published after 1990 in six highly ranked and influential Political Science Journals, namely *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Review*, *Political Analysis*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *International Affairs*, *European Journal of International Relations*. The PSE corpus consists of 532.702 tokens.

The second corpus, Political Science Expert Romanian Corpus (PSRo), contains 50 research articles (RA) published after 1990 in seven Political Science journals published in Romania in the Romanian language (*Sfera Politicii*, *Polis*, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Europaea*, *Analele Universității din București*. *Seria Științe Politice*, *Studia Politica*. *Romanian Political Science Review*, *Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași (Serie Nouă) Științe Politice*). These journals are the only ones in the discipline that publish articles in the Romanian language. The PSRo corpus consists of 268,671 tokens.

The third corpus, Political Science L2 English Expert Corpus (PSRoE), also contains 50 research articles (RA) published after 1990 in 14 Political Science journals published in Romania in the English language (*Sfera Politicii*, *Polis*, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Europaea*, *Analele Universității din București*. *Seria Științe Politice*, *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, *The Romanian Journal of Political Science*, *Studia Politica*. *Romanian Political Science Review*, *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, *Revista de Științe Politice*. *Revue des Sciences Politiques*, *Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași*. *Științe Politice*,

*Europolity. Continuity and Change in European Governance, Europolis, Journal Of Political Science And Theory, On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe, Eastern Journal of European Studies, Conflict Studies Quarterly*) by authors whose L1 is Romanian. The PSRoE consists of 344.787 tokens.

LancsBox (Brezina, Weill-Tessier & McEnery, 2020) was used to generate 3-word, 4-word and 5-word bundle lists for each corpus and to identify the context of use. I contrasted relative frequencies and patterns across the four corpora.

## Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on one genre in particular, wherein genre is understood as “a multifaceted construct characterized by a range of features that include social actions, communities of practice, power relations, texts, and the interactions among texts” (Flowerdew, 2011, p. 120). The research article (RA) genre, under investigation here, is widely understood as “a codification of disciplinary knowledge” (Hyland, 2007, p. 64), and thus perhaps the most important genre in all academic disciplines. In this context, scholars have stressed the importance of “rhetorical consciousness raising” (Swales qtd. in Hyland, 2005, p. 181), i.e. making students aware of rhetorical features and linguistic patterns that are used in their particular discipline.

To establish the connection between rhetorical and linguistic features, i.e. between purpose and form, I draw from Hyland’s early seminal work, *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing* (2005), as well as his 2008 article, “As can be seen: Lexical bundles and disciplinary variation.” He understands metadiscourse as “the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community” (2005, p. 37). As such, there are two main types of metadiscourse markers, i.e. interactive, which have a guiding role, and interactional, which serve the function of involving the reader in the text (Hyland, 2005, p. 44-45). Table, 1 below explains and exemplifies types of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers which will be referred to later in this paper.

**Table 1.** *Metadiscourse markers (Hyland, 2005, p.49)*

Category	Function	Examples
<b>Interactive</b>		
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses	In addition; but; thus; and;
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	Finally; to conclude; my purpose is;
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see Fig.; in section, 2;
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X; Z states
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meanings	Namely; e.g.; such as; in other words;

Category	Function	Examples
<b>Interactional</b>		
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might; perhaps; possible;
Boosters	Emphasize certainty or close dialogue	In fact; definitely; it is clear that;
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	Unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our;
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see that;

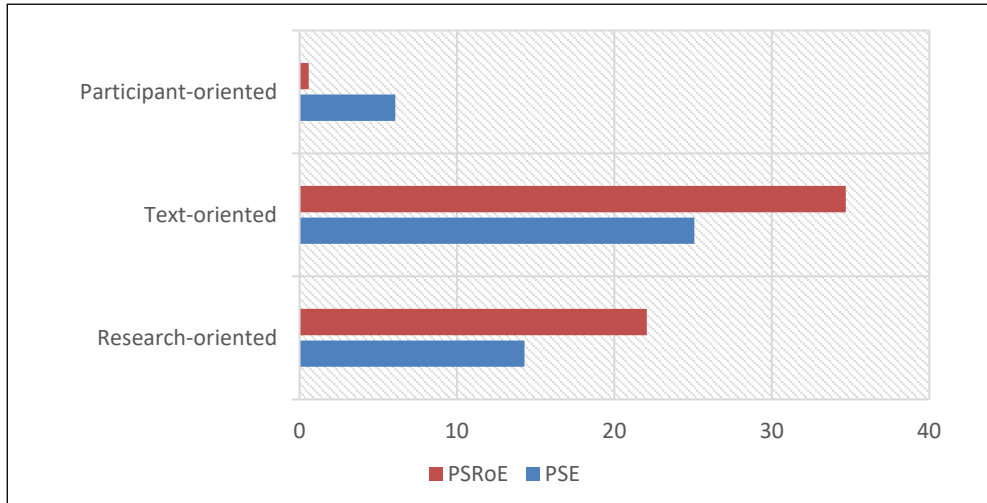
Hyland (2008) expands on his initial findings, which focused on six disciplines (Applied Linguistics, Public Administration, Business Studies, Computer Science, Electronic Engineering, Biology), by analyzing the variation of lexical bundles between disciplines (see Table 2). Lexical bundles refer to “words which follow each other more frequently than expected by chance, helping to shape text meanings and contributing to our sense of distinctiveness in a register” (Hyland, 2008, p. 5).

*Table 2. Functions of lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008, p. 13-14)*

<b>Research-oriented</b>	
Location	at the beginning of, at the same time, in the present study
Procedure	the use of the, the role of the, the purpose of the, the operation of the
Quantification	the magnitude of the, a wide range of, one of the most
Description	the structure of the, the size of the, the surface of the
<b>Text-oriented</b>	
Transition signals	on the other hand, in addition to the, in contrast to the
Resultative signals	as a result of, it was found that, these results suggest that
Structuring signals	in the present study, in the next section, as shown in figure
Framing signals	in the case of, with respect to the, on the basis of, in the presence of, with the exception of
<b>Participant-oriented</b>	
Stance features	are likely to be, may be due to, it is possible that
Engagement features	it should be noted that, as can be seen

The proficient use of lexical bundles that function as metadiscourse markers give the appearance of communicative competence in one's discipline (cf. Hyland, 2008, p. 8). This is particularly important for scholars who write in an L2 as disciplinary metadiscourse marker differ depending on the language used. It is not within the scope of this paper to investigate the causes of this variation between writing in the same discipline in different languages, but it will point to linguistic differences identified in the corpus analyses below.

## Results



*Fig. 1. Types of metadiscourse markers in PSE and PSRoE*

3-, 4- and 5-word lexical bundles (or N-grams) were identified in all three corpora. The initial results included lexical bundles which did not express metadiscourse markers, but these were manually removed. In what follows, I offer a comparison between the most frequent 20 lexical bundles in the three corpora. However, it is worth noting that the lexical bundles qua metadiscourse markers found in the PSRo corpus differ quite widely in type from those of the PSE corpus. A quantitative comparison between types of metadiscourse markers in the two corpora would be misguided given that the two languages have different means of articulating such structures. What is expressed with the use of three different words in Romanian might be translated as a single word in English, as is the case of ‘first’ or ‘firstly’ which can be translated as ‘în primul rând’ – a lexical bundle that has high frequency in the PSRo but was not investigated in the PSE corpus. Despite this, a description of the PSRo corpus might prove illuminating for this analysis nonetheless, providing an overview of the types of metadiscourse markers typical of Political Science in Romanian and allowing for, at the very least, an item by item comparison of the two corpora where synonymous phrases have been identified within the 20 most frequent lexical bundles.

As Figure 1 shows, overall, the English L1 corpus, PSE, has lower frequencies of lexical bundles across the board most likely due to a greater variety of lexical structures and higher vocabulary density in the corpus. The two expert corpora in English, PSE (L1 English) and PSRoE (L2 English), have a similar distribution of types of metadiscourse markers: the most

frequent in both corpora are text-oriented markers, the second most frequent are research-oriented markers, and the third most frequent are participant-oriented markers. However, while in general in the PSE corpus lexical bundles of any type have lower frequencies, this is not true of participant-oriented markers, which are much more frequent than in the PSRoE corpus. In what follows, I will detail these differences between the three corpora by referring to specific lexical bundles.

### **Frequent lexical bundles associated with metadiscourse markers in PSE (expert corpus in L1 English)**

The most frequent 20 lexical bundles associated with metadiscourse markers of each type (3-, 4-, 5-word bundles) in the first corpus analyzed, i.e. the PSE corpus, show a preference for text-oriented metadiscourse markers (see Table 3). Resultative signals are the most numerous in this category. Some examples include ‘the effect of’ or ‘the impact of,’ which appear quite frequently in the corpus. Framing signals (e.g. ‘in terms of,’ ‘in the case of,’ ‘on the basis of,’ ‘the level of,’ ‘in the absence of’) in the PSE corpus have a similar frequency as resultative signals, but are, in contrast, significantly more varied. Transition signals (e.g. ‘as well as,’ ‘on the one hand,’ ‘on the other hand’) are also frequent, albeit not as frequent as resultative or framing signals. Structuring signals, such as ‘in the first column,’ are the least frequent in this category.

*Table 3. 20 most frequent lexical bundles in PSE*

Type	Relative freq <sup>2</sup>	Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq
the number of	3.21	at the same time	0.99	in the case of the	0.31
as well as	3.13	the end of the	0.93	statistically significantly different from the	0.30
the effect of	2.55	in the case of	0.92	on the one hand the	0.16
more likely to	2.38	on the other hand	0.84	at the same time the	0.15
the effects of	2.23	are more likely to	0.82	as a result of the	0.13
one of the	2.08	the size of the	0.80	at the end of the	0.13
percent of the	2.02	the extent to which	0.78	estimates of the effects of	0.13
such as the	1.85	in the context of	0.75	in the first column of	0.13
the impact of	1.84	on the one hand	0.71	it is important to note	0.13
in terms of	1.78	on the basis of	0.65	it should be noted that	0.13
the case of	1.74	as well as the	0.58	one of the most important	0.13
in order to	1.72	the effect of the	0.58	at the heart of the	0.11
the role of	1.65	in the absence of	0.56	even in the absence of	0.11

<sup>2</sup> Relative frequency refers to number of occurrences/ 100.000 words. As the corpora are of different sizes, this option was chosen for a contrastive approach to be possible.

Type	Relative freq <sup>2</sup>	Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq
the end of	1.52	percent of the	0.52	is important to note that	0.11
likely to be	1.48	are likely to be	0.52	it is not surprising that	0.11
the relationship between	1.44	one of the most	0.50	on the emerging role of	0.11
the level of	1.37	it is important to	0.41	perspectives on the emerging role	0.11
the fact that	1.35	the effects of the	0.41	the case of interest and	0.11
there is no	1,31	as a result of	0.39	the emerging role of the	0.11
there is a	1,31	be more likely to	0.39	the probability of being preferred	0.11

As can be seen in Table 3, the next most frequent metadiscourse markers in the PSE corpus are research-oriented ones, especially those that have to do with quantification. The most frequent lexical bundles related to quantification are ones such as ‘the number of,’ ‘percent of the,’ ‘the size of the,’ or ‘statistically significantly different from the.’ Metadiscourse markers related to procedure (e.g. ‘in order to,’ ‘the role of’) and location (‘the end of’) are also present, but in significantly lower numbers. This suggests a preference for quantitative methods in the most quoted studies in the discipline of Political Science.

Participant-oriented metadiscourse markers are the least well represented in the PSE corpus. However, engagement features do make an appearance. These include structures like: ‘it is important to note,’ ‘it should be noted that,’ ‘it is not surprising that.’ Stance features, on the other hand, are encountered more often in this corpus but these instances only include one lexical bundle, namely ‘are likely to be.’

In terms of code glosses, only ‘such as’ was present within the 20 most frequent lexical bundles. Other means of expressing exemplification were not found in this list, in spite of the fact that many of them are also two-word lexical bundles (e.g. ‘for example,’ ‘for instance’).

Surprisingly, no self-mentions were evident in any of the three types of structures (3-, 4-, 5-word lexical bundles) in the PSE corpus. However, the word ‘we’ is one of the most frequent words in the corpus, being used almost 6 times more than the singular ‘I,’ most likely because a large number of the studies in the PSE corpus are written in collaboration and have several authors.

### **Frequent lexical bundles associated with metadiscourse markers in the PSRo (expert corpus in L1 Romanian)**

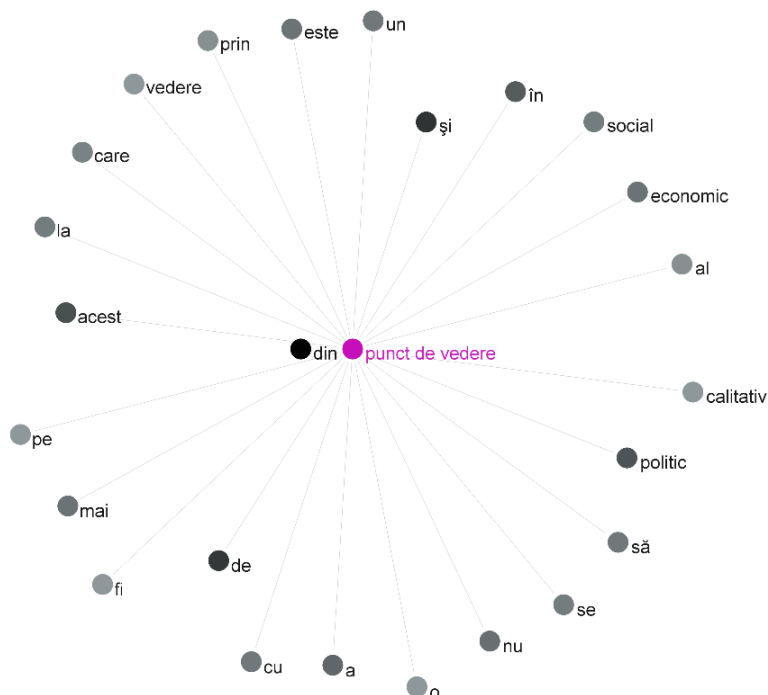
When considering the PSRo corpus, it becomes immediately apparent that text-oriented markers are the most prominent (see Table 4). Framing and transition signals dominate the list of 20 most frequently used lexical bundles

in Political Science work written in L1 Romanian, these representing the majority of lexical bundles identified. Some examples of framing signals include: ‘din punct de vedere’ (*from the perspective of*), ‘în ceea ce privește’ (*in terms of*), ‘cu privire la’ (*regarding*), ‘în condițiile în care’ (*considering that*), ‘în cazul în care’ (*in case*), ‘în acest sens’ (*in this respect*).

Phrases containing the structure ‘punct de vedere’ (*point of view*) outnumber any other framing signal most likely due to the versatility of the structure in Romanian. Consider the following examples from the corpus at hand:

- (1) *Din acest punct de vedere, cenzorii americani au avut “dreptate.”* (PSRo1010)
- (2) *Putem vorbi astfel de inconveniențe reale, din punct de vedere comercial.* (PSRo1016)
- (3) *Dacă ne referim la regiune din punct de vedere al domeniului economic, definiția nu va exclude...* (PSRo1021)

As the graphic representation of collocations below shows (Figure 2), ‘punct de vedere’ collocates, first and foremost, with *din*, and with adjectives such as ‘politic,’ ‘economic,’ ‘social.’



**Fig. 2.** Collocations with 'punct de vedere' in PSRo

The phrase ‘punct de vedere,’ does not appear as ‘din punctul meu de vedere,’ i.e. as a self-mention, except in quotations from speeches by Romanian public figures.

Comparatively, in the PSE corpus, the equivalent structure ‘point of view’ does not appear at all among the most used lexical bundles, in part because it does not collocate the same as in English. For example, ‘point of view’ cannot be used as ‘din punct de vedere politic’ (a word-for-word translation would be \*‘from the point of view of politics;’ it is used to mean ‘politically’ or ‘from a political perspective’). Even when accounting for the relative frequency of the lexical bundle ‘from a \* perspective’ in the PSE corpus (2.77 and compared to the 3.76 ‘punct de vedere’ in the PSRo), the tendency still seems to be towards the overuse of ‘punct de vedere’ and synonymous expressions like ‘in ceea ce privește’ or ‘cu privire la.’ We may surmise that the studies in L1 Romanian place more value on offering multiple perspectives on the same topic rather than engaging with a single viewpoint.

Transition signals are also very frequently encountered in the PSRo corpus. As with framing signals, one structure dominates and there is less variety in the lexical bundles used. The dominant structure is ‘pe de altă parte’ (*on the other hand*), followed by its counterpart ‘pe de o parte’ (*on the one hand*). These related phrases are considerably more frequent in PSRo than in PSE, where they would appear as ‘on the one hand’/ ‘on the other hand.’ Other transition signals used are ones such as ‘în raport cu’ (*compared to*), ‘în timp ce’ (*while*) or ‘în ciuda faptului că’ (*in spite of the fact that*).

**Table 4.** 20 most frequent lexical bundles in PSRo

Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq
punct de vedere	3.76	pe de altă parte	3.27	din ce în ce mai	1.00
pe de altă	3.31	din punct de vedere	2.90	din punctul de vedere al	0.74
de altă parte	3.27	în ceea ce privește	2.45	din acest punct de vedere	0.63
în ceea ce	3.01	pe de o parte	2.23	de cele mai multe ori	0.59
din punct de	2.90	din ce în ce	1.04	mai mult sau mai puțin	0.55
cu privire la	2.60	ce în ce mai	1.00	cea mai mare parte a	0.44
în raport cu	2.49	în condițiile în care	1.00	ce în ce mai mult	0.29
ceea ce privește	2.45	iar pe de altă	0.96	atât mai mult cu cât	0.26
de o parte	2.42	în cazul în care	0.93	cu atât mai mult cu	0.26
în primul rând	2.23	în cele din urmă	0.89	este departe de a fi	0.18
de a fi	2.04	în măsura în care	0.85	din punct de vedere al	0.14
în același timp	2.01	acest punct de vedere	0.74	în cele mai multe cazuri	0.14
ar trebui să	1.93	din punctul de vedere	0.74	departe de a fi un	0.14
în funcție de	1.89	mai mult sau mai	0.70	din punctul meu de vedere	0.11
în acest sens	1.75	cu scopul de a	0.67	fie că e vorba despre	0.11
în timp ce	1.67	din acest punct de	0.63	să joace un rol important	0.11



Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq
cum ar fi	1.30	în ciuda faptului că	0.63	se poate vorbi de o	0.11
se referă la	1.30	de cele mai multe	0.59	atunci când este vorba despre	0.11
modul în care	1.30	cea mai mare parte	0.55	unul dintre cele mai importante	0.11

Participant-oriented phrases are the second-most frequent within the most used lexical bundles in the PSRo corpus. All of these are stance markers such as ‘ar trebui să’ (*\* should*), ‘cu atât mai mult cu cât’ (*all the more*), ‘este departe de a fi’ (*is far from being*), or ‘se poate vorbi de o.’ While the only very frequent stance marker (‘are likely to’) in the PSE corpus is used to qualify definitive statements, some of the stance markers in the Romanian corpus have the opposite effect (‘cu atât mai mult cu cât,’ ‘este departe de a fi’), while others have a normative role (‘ar trebui să’) or are used to depersonalize statements (‘se poate vorbi de o’). There are no engagement markers among the 20 most used lexical bundles in the PSRo corpus.

Research-oriented markers have the lowest frequency among the most used lexical bundles in the PSRo corpus. More specifically, far fewer of the most frequent lexical bundles in the corpus express quantification compared to the PSE corpus. In fact, there is only one phrase that may be interpreted as expressing quantification, namely ‘în măsura în care’ (*to the extent to which*) which also appears in the PSE corpus, as ‘the extent to which,’ with lower frequency. One may even argue that this phrase does not express quantification at all, but is used in Romanian to qualify statements, as a stance marker. This seems to go against Pal’s assertion that there is a preference for empirical studies in the discipline of Political Science in Eastern Europe (2010, p. 84), but further research is needed in this direction as corpus studies are not equipped to identify approaches used in scholarly papers.

On the other hand, lexical bundles denoting location are slightly more frequent in the PSRo corpus, even though there is only one phrase in this category in the case of both corpora (‘at the same time’/ ‘în același timp’). The same applies for lexical bundles expressing procedure: the same structures appear in both corpora (‘in order to’/ ‘cu scopul de a,’ ‘the role of’/ ‘să joace un rol’), but they appear more frequently in one corpus, in this case PSE. Only one structuring signal is evident in the most frequent bundles in the PSRo corpus (‘în cele din urmă’ – *finally*).

In terms of code glosses, the two corpora are quite similar, both exhibiting a frequent use of ‘such as the’/ ‘cum ar fi.’ Unlike in the PSE corpus, one type of self-mention is frequent in the PSRo corpus and it contains the structure discussed above, i.e. ‘point of view.’ This structure is ‘din punctul meu de vedere’ (*from my point of view*).

### Frequent lexical bundles associated with metadiscourse markers in the PSRoE (expert corpus in L2 English)

In the PSRoE corpus, among the most frequent lexical bundles, text-oriented features are the most frequent in the PSRoE corpus, especially framing signals. This is similar to the situation in the PSRo corpus and is perhaps where the interference of L1 Romanian is most obvious. For instance, the structures ‘in terms of’ (equivalent of ‘în ceea ce privește’ or ‘cu privire la’) and ‘from this point of view’ (equivalent of ‘din punct de vedere’) are much more frequent in the PSRoE corpus than in the PSE corpus. Although the same two are used in both corpora (‘as well as’ and ‘on the one hand’/ ‘on the other hand’), transition signals are used almost twice as much in the PSRo corpus compared to the PSE corpus. In general, a higher frequency of the same items is suggestive of repetitiveness and lower vocabulary density. Only one resultative signal appears in PSRoE with high frequency: ‘as a result of.’ On the other hand, structuring signals are more frequent than in the PSE corpus, e.g. ‘the second half of the,’ ‘the beginning of the.’

*Table 5. 20 most frequent lexical bundles in PSRoE*

Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq	Type	Relative freq
in order to	5.68	in the case of	2.23	in the case of the	0.43
as well as	5.39	as well as the	1.62	one of the most important	0.37
the fact that	4.81	on the other hand	1.42	as in the case of	0.34
one of the	3.82	at the same time	1.30	as a result of the	0.31
in terms of	3.42	the fact that the	1.18	the second half of the	0.29
the case of	3.33	when it comes to	1.04	at the beginning of the	0.26
in the case	2.72	one of the most	1.01	on the other hand the	0.26
part of the	2.64	the end of the	0.98	to take into account the	0.23
well as the	1.62	in the context of	0.92	in the context of the	0.23
the use of	1.59	on the one hand	0.78	at the same time the	0.23
the same time	1.59	at the level of	0.75	due to the fact that	0.23
at the same	1.53	the case of the	0.75	at the level of the	0.23
the end of	1.50	the role of the	0.69	and on the other hand	0.20
the number of	1.47	as a result of	0.66	this does not mean that	0.20
the other hand	1.42	on the basis of	0.63	from this point of view	0.20
the importance of	1.39	the beginning of the	0.60	and at the same time	0.20
the relationship between	1.39	to the fact that	0.60	like in the case of	0.17
the process of	1.39	it is important to	0.58	to the fact that the	0.17
the level of	1.36	being able to be	0.55	increase in the number of	0.17
according to the	1.33	in the field of	0.52	in this respect is the	0.14

Research-oriented ones are the second-most numerous (see Table 5). Of these, more have to do with quantification than in the PSRo corpus, but

quantifiers are still not as frequent as in PSE. For example, while ‘number of’ appears frequently in both PSE and PSRoE, its frequency is almost double in PSE. On the other hand, ‘one of the most important,’ which appears in both corpora as well, is more frequent in PSRoE, which suggests a tendency towards evaluation or ranking not evident in the PSRo corpus – the equivalent structure ‘unul dintre cele mai importante’ has a much lower rate of use.

Unlike in the PSE corpus, in the top lexical bundles used, there are more structures that express procedure than ones that express quantification. The difference is driven especially by the much higher appearance of ‘in order to’ in the PSRoE corpus than both in PSE and PSRo, which suggests that its higher frequency is not caused by inter-linguistic interference from L1 Romanian. Structures expressing location are not uncommon either. For example, ‘at the same time’ has similar occurrence rates in PSE and in PSRoE.

Participant-oriented features are not frequent in the PSRoE corpus. Only one engagement feature is included in the list of 20 most frequent bundles, namely ‘it is important to.’ No stance features, code glosses or self-mentions are apparent either. As we shall see below, this is true for the student texts analyzed as well, which shows the influence of Romanian academic writing norms on both expert and student writing in English.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis of the L2 English corpus, i.e. the expert corpus PSRoE, predictably, suggests lower vocabulary density as well as decreased variety in metadiscourse markers frequently used in academic writing in L2 English. Consequently, tertiary level English for Specific Purposes and Academic Writing classes should include activities to increase the variety of metadiscourse markers in student writing.

Compared to the L1 English expert corpus, PSE, the L2 English corpus (PSRoE) does not use participant-oriented markers with high frequency. In the L1 Romanian corpus, PSRo, participant-oriented markers are used quite frequently, but they are of a different nature than in the PSE corpus, expressing categorical and normative stance whereas in PSE these markers are used to qualify statements. Exercises for ESP classes should address this issue by focusing on means used for qualifying statements and other stance markers.

Similarly, resultative signals occur more rarely in the L2 English corpus (PSRoE) in contrast to PSE. This would again suggest a preference for descriptive moves, but more in-depth research is necessary to verify this interpretation. ESP classes should include linguistic means of expressing results.

Additionally, there is a tendency to overuse framing in the expert in L2 English written by writers whose L1 is Romanian. This is particularly prominent in the use of the phrase ‘punct de vedere,’ which appears in L2 English as ‘in terms of’ or ‘when it comes to.’ Data-driven exercises would be well-suited for making the students aware of linguistic differences such as this.

## Limitations

While this study has focused on the most frequent lexical bundles in four types of Political Science corpora, more research is needed which includes the corpora as a whole to confirm its conclusions.

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# Patterns in Romanian.

## Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language

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**Abstract.** The following paper addresses the issue of teaching Romanian as a foreign language in a non-formal adult education setting. The pedagogy of Romanian as a foreign language is only at the beginning and the didactics in the existing workbooks is often faulty and does not cover the subjects properly. This article suggests a new way of teaching Romanian morphology based on linguistic patterns that reshape the way Romanian grammar is thought of, eliminating the need for syntactic analysis. It is a response to the practical requirements of a market that is seeing an increase in the demand for learning Romanian as a foreign language. As such it offers specific ways of teaching aspects of Romanian grammar to non-native speakers, developed from a comparative linguistic analysis of the language families that have influenced it over time. The result consists of templates that can be used as didactic material to simplify the teaching and learning of complex structures, based on the idea that Romanian is a language of patterns and tendencies and not of rules. The linguistic patterns can be set in parallel to most Indo-European language families, making this type of didactics adaptable to many modern European languages. It also offers an in-depth analysis of specific morphological and phonetic features that explain various so-called exceptions. The subjects covered are the alphabet, patterns in nouns and adjectives, plurals, cases and declension and verb groups.

**Keywords:** *Romanian, patterns, teaching, language, grammar, didactics.*

### Introduction

Teaching Romanian as a foreign language is a relatively new requirement on the private classes market. It has become more and more in demand over the past decade due to the increase in permanent or transitory immigration. Companies have started offering it as a settlement bonus for expats who choose to come to work and live in Romania for shorter or longer periods of time. Private individuals who have relocated in this country for professional or personal reasons have also increased. However, the pedagogy

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of Romanian as a foreign language is only at the beginning, the only experience in teaching it coming from some university departments who focus on foreign students and private companies that offer language classes. Workbooks have existed since the '90s but most older ones tend to be ill suited for adult students and do not consider the implications of teaching Romanian grammar to a non-native. There are some newer workbooks that have started to adapt the study material to the needs of the students but when it comes to proper, logical, and useful explanations for grammar, they merely cover half of what is needed. The teachers themselves have little experience with Romanian as a foreign language and usually follow the books, but not everyone can teach Romanian successfully, especially if they rely only on the existing workbooks. Formal pedagogical studies do not offer any training for the future teachers regarding Romanian as a foreign language, the standard pedagogy of Romanian is not fitted for foreigners, private companies do not offer their own pedagogical training as this is not part of their business. Thus, there appears to be a great part missing in learning to teach Romanian as a foreign language with the only training being on the job, through personal experience and intuition. This article is part of a wider research that aims to fill this gap in education by offering practical, tested, and applied methods in teaching Romanian as a foreign language to adult students. The focus is on adults because immigrant children get to learn the language in school. The methods presented here are centered around the teaching and learning of grammar and comprise the main parts of speech, nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns. Romanian is a highly phonetic and flexible language, so there are very few absolute rules in how its grammar works, which can seem very confusing for non-natives when they first start to learn it. However, upon a closer inspection, Romanian turns out to be a language of patterns, especially Romanian grammar. There are more patterns in both phonetics and morphology than native speakers are aware of. That is why without proper training, they cannot explain why things are created the way they are. The method of teaching and learning presented in this article highlights these patterns through templates that are ready to use by students and teachers alike. Their main purpose is to make the complexities of a phonetical, morphologically diverse grammar simple and logical, easy to follow and remember. They do not claim to be exhaustive, nor to cover every part of grammar, only the main patterns discovered and used so far. Some parts of grammar are much easier to teach and learn so they do not necessarily need much research or explanations, for example, Romanian numerals.

## Theoretical framework

### *The importance of grammar in adult pedagogy*

The modern foreign language pedagogy tends to focus more on the intuitive acquisition of the language to the detriment of a rigorous knowledge of its structure. These types of teaching can work well when it comes to children but less with adults who have different needs and ways of thinking. Some classical methodologies are still efficient and even preferred by adult students. This is due to several factors, like: the lack of time, personal motivation, professional requirements and ways of thinking.

Another important limitation of a purely communicative approach is that certain types of language knowledge and skills are difficult to attain in the process of naturalistic learning, for example, academic and professional speaking and writing. It has been suggested that advanced proficiency and accuracy in spoken and written production are essential for effective functioning in academic, professional and some vocational communications, so attaining high levels of language competence and performance may require instructed learning. (Hinkel, Fotos, 2002, p. 5)

This formal instruction cannot be based solely on intuitive communication and learning, as it would naturally take place in a so-called “language bath”, namely complete socio-cultural immersion. There is a need to consider teaching clear linguistic structures, especially for grammar. Knowledge of grammatical structures, accumulated through formal training, can be more relevant and applicable for students and thus easier to internalize. The learner’s internal process, especially the observation of structures is significant for learning success.

There are two types of grammatical knowledge: explicit and/ or declarative knowledge, which is conscious knowledge about grammatical rules and forms developed through instructions; and implicit or procedural knowledge, which is the ability to speak a language unconsciously developed through acts of meaning focused communication. (Hinkel, Fotos, 2002, p. 6)

These acts must be repeated until they become automatic, a difficult task for adults, because their mind already has sets of automatic responses that must be either restructured or replaced, depending on the logic of the new language.

A good starting point to form new automatisms is to resort to structures that exist in the native language and are perhaps similar to the new language – even if these are unconscious. This process can begin by remembering the basic grammar of the native language through an observation exercise and the knowledge they had about it at one point.



When a language point is noticed frequently, learners develop awareness of it and unconsciously compare it with their existing system of linguistic knowledge, unconsciously constructing new hypotheses to accommodate the differences between the noticed information and their L2 competence. Then they test these new hypotheses – again unconsciously – by attending to language input and also by getting feedback on their output using the new form. In this way, implicit knowledge has been created. According to this model, activities that raise learners' awareness of grammar forms – whether through explicit instruction or through communicative exposure that encourages learners to become aware of the forms – can assist learners to acquire these forms. (Hinkel, Fotos, 2002, p. 7)

This way of acquiring language is intuitive because it is based more on unconscious processes. Most native speakers do not know or understand the language structures they use, nor do they need to if they will never try to learn another language. Even if they studied grammar in school, they were either not interested in it or forgot it, so they are no longer able to explain why they speak the way they speak. Only when confronted with a new system of perception and approach to the world around them – that is, another language – do they become aware of the differences between the two ways of thinking. Only then can intuitive knowledge crystallize into clear patterns.

The way the adult mind works allows the faster acquisition of abstract structures than the minds of children, so the methodological approach must be different.

Learning and acquiring grammar can increase the accuracy and linguistic knowledge gained and can facilitate the internalization of the syntactic system and the development of fluency. When it comes to adults, the question is not whether to teach grammar, but rather, what are the optimal conditions for explicit teaching of grammar.

Grammar is indispensable for effective communication (for an extensive overview see e.g. Paradowski, 2003). Although in recent years emphasis has shifted away from the teaching of grammar and disciples of the communicative approach maintain that what ought to be taught are essentially language functions, the fact remains undeniable that these functions are made up from grammatical elements. Ellis (1985: 229) adds that 'to deny that instruction can help learners to acquire a L2 is not only counter-intuitive, but contrary to the personal experience of countless teachers and students. While classroom communication renders it possible for second (L2) and foreign language (FL) learners to acquire basic grammatical competence, acquiring full systemic proficiency seems unfeasible. (Barker 2008 p. 226)

Modern pedagogical approaches, especially when they target children, suggest learning in complete immersion, intuitively, only through contact with another language. At a young age this cannot be otherwise,

children being unable to understand abstract structures. However, they also possess a fluid type of intelligence. In adulthood, the same approach risks failing because it is not compatible with crystallized thinking. There is a need to recover some so-called classic teaching-learning methodologies and integrate them in a communicative-interactive approach. Teaching grammar in a structured and rigorous way does not prevent the development of communication skills or an interactive attitude in the classroom. On the contrary, in the case of adults it leads to more efficient learning and to the faster acquisition of new knowledge because it allows students to become aware of the language structures used and thus master communication.

### ***How adult minds process language***

From a cognitive perspective, language learning is very different at a young age than at an adult age. Cognitive studies done on children of different ages show that they learn the native language and non-native languages modularly, through two different and relatively autonomous processes – the vocabulary part and the syntactic part. The two usually develop in parallel and thus create connections that mask their autonomy, but they can develop separately. Studies on children with learning disabilities or low intellect show that language learning is not so much about intelligence as a child. They can acquire a rich vocabulary or use complex syntax, without mastering both at the same level and without equaling them at the mathematical, visual, sensory, etc. level. The mental flexibility that exists until the age of puberty favors the acquisition of languages. Once this critical period is over, the capacity to assimilate new languages also changes.

In childhood, when language learning is at the biological optimum, the degree of kinship between the first and second language is irrelevant for the ease of learning the second language. Differences in structure are ignored and the similarity of generative principles is fully explored. All natural languages have the same complexity. In adults, the second language is much harder to learn if it does not have similarities with the native one. (Lennberg, 1967, p. 364)

This is the main theory when it comes to language teaching: children are better equipped to acquire new language structures because of their brain structure, while adults have lost that flexibility for other benefits. That is why it is easier for them to learn a language similar to the native one, because they do not have profoundly different linguistic structures that contrast with what is already known about how the language should work. Initially, it was thought that all neuronal plasticity disappears during adolescence, but more recently it has been questioned. The idea of continuing education involves

maintaining the capacity for development, even organically through adulthood. But even if a degree of flexibility is maintained, learning a new language is generally done by other means.

In the case of adults, cognitive studies show that there is a correlation between the general IQ and language learning and that a special language ability is given by memory and the ability to retain a lot of information over a long period of time. There is a register of sensory information that has the role of maintaining for a short period of time the information received, the short-term memory, called working memory and then the accumulated database corresponds to long-term memory. (Kekenbosch, 1994, p. 16)

In adulthood, the general IQ but also the dominant types of intelligence are more important in learning than in childhood. The adult mind has already been trained through education and had developed certain skills to process new information. It is assumed that memory has already accumulated enough resources and can be used as a central tool to find benchmarks and parallels for new knowledge. The lack of a general knowledge base at this age slows down the learning process of subjects that go beyond the sphere of individual concerns.

Adult subjects who managed to learn languages quickly and efficiently had a better memory than others, but learning was no longer modular, as in children. The mental connections between syntax and vocabulary were already welded together and functioned as a whole. Therefore, the difference in performance is given by intelligence and memory. (Skehan 1998 p. 208)

Intelligence can allow an individual to cope without education, but education allows him to cope without intelligence. After a certain age, intelligence alone can no longer compensate for the deficiencies accumulated over time.

Acknowledging Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis or Seliger's (1978) milder differential fossilization hypothesis the implication is that once a certain age has been reached by the learner, with reduced (if any) access to Universal Grammar (UG), the grammatical system of a foreign language will never be internalized without the crutch of formal instruction. While a child can acquire languages in a way parallel to his/her mother tongue and become a truly multilingual speaker, the adult no longer has the same capacity to acquire an L2 naturally and automatically. (Barker 2008, p. 225)

Adult learners who suddenly find themselves having to live in a different culture and speak a language they have never known before having great difficulties in assimilating even basic grammar.

Immigrants and expatriates are the main group of adults who directly face the need to learn a new language. Their survival and integration into the community depends on their ability to take on the traits of the members of society around them, even if it only means being able to communicate. Their up-to-date education, as well as their profession, will be crucial to their success. People who come from philological or humanistic fields are privileged over those who come from technical fields, in the situation where we are not talking about a language close to the native one, because they already have a knowledge base with which to compare and integrate the new language. However, there are few cases of total ingestion of adult immigrants in the adopted society and only their children have a real chance to truly belong to the new world.

### **The difficulties of writing in Romanian**

Romanian is a language with a Dacian substratum, a Latin superstratum that becomes a substratum next to the Slavic superstratum and influences such as Polish in the Middle Ages, Turkish in the Phanariot period and French in the 19th century. The Cyrillic alphabet has been used in this country since the 10th century, and Old Church Slavonic was the vernacular language for Eastern Europe. The church and the nobility used Cyrillic until about 1850, which makes the transition to the Latin alphabet quite recent compared to other languages. The long use of the Cyrillic alphabet has influenced the modern structure of the Latin alphabet, certain letters, and the relationship between them.

The Romanian alphabet is taught to foreigners as it is taught to children in school, as a long list of signs, with one word as an example for each. Children who are native speakers, are already accustomed to the phonetics of the language, they just have to learn to write what is said, but foreigners who learn Romanian know almost nothing about the language itself and cannot suddenly write what they hear. A more appropriate approach to their requirements presents the alphabet differently, starting from the known letters – common in most European language, to the new ones, with emphasis on the real phonetic differences between the sounds and not on the writing concessions. The letters are no longer presented in a long line but are grouped and added gradually once the previous ones are understood.

Also, a distinction must be made between long ‘i’ and short ‘i’, that appears in plurals and although is in fact a phonetically distinct sound, even if spelled the same way. For a non-native who does not come from a Slavic environment, the short ‘i’ is often not perceived as an ‘i’, but rather as a soft

sound, like the Slavic sound **Ь**, which changes the pronunciation of the previous letter but has no phonetic value in itself. That is why a difference must be made between the two, even if for the natives they do not present learning problems if they are presented as one and the same.

*Table 1. A different Romanian alphabet*

Common alphabet	Slavic consonants	Groups of letters
A an B ban C cor D dor E est F foc G gol H han I iar L loc M mare N nor O om P pom R rar S sac T tare U urs V vis X xilofon Z zar	J joc / pijama Ș șarpe / pește Ț țăp / preț	CE cer / pace CHE chef / pereche CI cine / vecin CHI chin / vechi  GE gem / minge GHE ghem GI gin / magie GHI ghindă
	Slavic vowels  Ă măr / vacă Î / Â în / când -I ( ă scurt ) pantofi beri pini	Rare letters  K kilogram / kilometru Q quintet W watt Y yală

Another recurring problem in teaching the Romanian language to foreigners are the letters **Ț, Ș, Î, Â, Ă**. These letters are not perceived as distinct and are overlooked or misunderstood. The accompanying diacritics are set aside, and the sounds approximated. The reason is their proximity in spelling to **T, S, I** and **A**. Most non-natives do not perceive the difference between **Î** and **Ă**, or **Â** and **Ă**, so they choose not to pronounce and write these letters properly. As a result, words are often confused or misunderstood when spoken by the natives. The origin of the problem lies in the transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, which took place in the middle of the 19th century. The Romanian Cyrillic alphabet had specific letters for these sounds, which were not confused at all. Below we have the Latin-Cyrillic correspondence:

**Ш – Ș C – S**  
**Ц – Ț T – T**  
**Ъ – Â A – A**  
**Ы – Î, Â И – I**

The spelling of the letters in Cyrillic was very different and they could not be confused. At the time of the transition to the Latin alphabet, two phenomena took place. First, it was adapted for native speakers who already knew the language and knew what it should sound like. They just had to get used to a new type of writing. The human mind can recognize the words it knows without having to read each letter, it approximates them and jumps over certain very familiar parts. That is why they can be easily read in the native language without diacritics. Another aspect that influenced the new Latin alphabet adopted was the printing press. There were already both Cyrillic and Latin printing presses, only they had a standard set of letters.

To adapt certain sounds, Romanians should have developed new Latin characters and produce them to be later used in print. This would have been expensive and useless because they already had the option of using diacritics that existed in other languages, such as French. It was much easier to use several accents that existed, for Î and Ă and commas for Ș and Ț. Native speakers would have recognized the words and become accustomed to the new letters. However, those who learn the language have difficulty distinguishing them, so the recommended teaching method is by drawing a parallel between the two alphabets. First, a short history of the language and its writing will be presented, then the letters will be placed in a table to see their correspondences and their clear differentiation. When the student is confronted with the Cyrillic spelling, he understands much better how different those sounds and letters are in fact and is more focused on writing them in the Latin alphabet. Prior to this awareness, diacritics are difficult to understand.

Another phenomenon happened with the letter Ш – ‘sci’, which appears in Slavonic manuscripts but disappears as a sound with the transition to the Latin alphabet. Transliteration turns it into ‘a **ști**’. At first glance it seems illogical, because the spelling **sci**, also exists in another Latin language, Italian, for example: ‘scienza nuova’. But in Italian **sci** is pronounced as ș. The fact that Romanian lost this sound with the abandonment of the Cyrillic alphabet has a simple explanation. It was written Ш but it was pronounced ȘȚI, and everyone knew how to read it. But in Cyrillic it was easier to write a letter than three, for economic reasons. Therefore, it is recommended that a short history Romanian language is presented first, with the main influences and the history of its writing.

### ***Cenuși or cenușe – Slavic phonetic rules in a Latin language***

The plural forms in Romanian are very complex and a difficult linguistic aspect for a non-native. It differs according to gender, ending, word

age and origin and has multiple forms, based on a series of rules that have gradually entered the language. For a native they are not necessarily apparent or intuitive, but they present themselves as a normality, a word sounds well or not, without consciously following a rule. In some cases, it is even difficult to assess whether the ending should be this or another and why. The same situation applies to the declension of feminine nouns in the Genitive-Dative case when there is a choice between the endings ‘-ei’ or ‘-ii’.

The first rule in forming the plural comes from ancient Latin and is applied to most nouns, namely the ending -i for masculine and ‘-e’ for feminine. If a word is already ending in ‘-e’, then it is natural to change into an ‘-i’ in the plural. This pattern can also be seen in Italian. The plural in Latin today is done in two main ways, due to their evolution. Italian and Romanian derived their nouns from the Nominative forms of classical Latin, and thus make the plural in ‘i’ or ‘e’, while the western branch, with French, Spanish and Portuguese, started from the Latin Accusative and make the plural in ‘s’:

*Cane* – ‘dog’ in Italian, ‘câine’ and ‘câini’ in Romanian

*Chien* – ‘chiens’ in French, ‘pero’ and ‘peros’ in Spanish, ‘cão’ and ‘cães’ in Portuguese

In Romanian, all masculine nouns form the plural in ‘-i’, some feminine nouns in ‘-e’, and neutral nouns in ‘-e’ or ‘-uri’. But many feminine nouns will make the plural in ‘-i’, for a seemingly incomprehensible reason, just because it seems to sound better. However, behind it there is linguistic rule, that does not exist in any other Latin language, because it comes from the Slavic languages. And since Romanian is the only Latin language that has suffered a Slavic influence, it is the only one that has it.

Slavic languages have a category of consonants called voiceless postalveolar fricatives, colloquially called whistling / hissing consonants., which are very important in phonetics, especially in forming the plural of nouns. These are: **k, g, h, ș, ȣi, j, ci / ce**. The rule is that a hissing consonant must be followed by a certain vowel, regardless of the gender of the noun or whether it is animated or inanimate. A word like book, for example, ‘książka’ in Polish, will make the plural ‘książki’, the same word – ‘книга’ in Russian, will be ‘книги’ for plural. In Romanian, however, this rule has been transmitted only in the case of certain whistling consonants, because some of them do not exist or have been overruled by different linguistic pattern and create a different ending. The whistling consonants that matter in Romanian are: **c, g, ș, j** either on the last syllable or on the penultimate one, a situation in which the plural will be made in ‘-i’, even if it is a feminine noun. This pattern applies primarily to words of Slavic or Old Latin origin. When it

comes to a newer word, usually French, the whistling rule meets other patterns and does not triumph every time.

Pisică – pisici (pl.)

Bodegă – bodegi (pl.) competing with colegă (of French origin) – colege (pl.)

Cenusă – cenuși (pl.)

Vraja – vrăji (pl.) competing with plajă (of French origin) – plaje (pl.)

As for the French loanwords appearing in the nineteenth century, the rule of whistling consonants does not necessarily apply. These words have been inherited from Latin and follow the Latin rule for feminine nouns, namely the plural in ‘-e’. A second Slavic phonetic influence in forming of the plural is reflected in the strength of the vowel ‘i’. Latin had long and short vowels, which changed the pronunciation of words, an aspect that has been lost in all Latin languages today, except Romanian, which makes a distinction between a regular ‘i’ and a final, plural ‘-i’, as well as for a regular ‘u’ and a final ‘u’. The same can be said when comparing the vowel, ‘a’ to ‘ă’ – with the latter possibly a version of a lost Latin short ‘a’.

Compare: minte – domni (pl), where ‘-i’ is barely heard

Or: muscă – dulău, where final ‘-u’ is a demivowel

Regardless of whether in Latin the final ‘-i’ was a long or short vowel (in Italian it’s long), Slavic languages have both a short ‘-i’ and a special sign, which has the role of softening the letter before it. When they overlap on a pattern in which the plural is made in ‘-i’, this ending can easily turn into a short or softened ‘-i’. Linguistic analysis and teaching of the Romanian language must take into account the existence of these vowel differences and phonetic patterns in order to have optimal results. In the following table are listed the main patterns for noun plurals in Romanian.

*Table 2. The plural of Romanian nouns*

Gender	Singular ending	Plural ending	Examples for singular	Examples for plural
Masculine	-consonant	-i (short)	bărbat	bărbați
	-u		fiu	fii
	-i		ochi	ochi
	-e		câine	câini
Feminine	-ă	-e/ -uri	casă	case
	-a	-le	cafea	cafele
	-e	-i	carte	cărți
Voiceless postalveolar fricative	-c	-i	pisică	pisici
	-g		fugă	fugi
	-ș		păpusă	păpuși
	-j		coajă	coji



Gender	Singular ending	Plural ending	Examples for singular	Examples for plural
Neutral Sg=masc. Pl=fem. New words, loan words, international words	-consonant -ou -i	-e -uri	restaurant tablou tramvai	restaurante tablouri tramvaie
Phonetic patterns	t+i (scurt) s+i (scurt) d+i (scurt) c+i (scurt) l+i (scurt) z+i (scurt)	-ți -și -zi -ci -i -ji		
Terminație	-că -ză -e -tă	-ci -ze -i -ți	Pisică Priză Carte hartă	Pisici Prize Cărți hărți

In addition to the patterns analyzed above, for feminine nouns there is an extra pattern of forming the plural in ‘-le’, if they end in ‘-a’ and not ‘-ă’, for words usually of Turkish, French or ancient Latin origin.

Tejghea – tejghele (Turkish)  
Narghilea – narghilele (Turkish)  
Bezea – bezele (French)  
Stea – stele (Latin)

The Romanian language has more than 7 vowels, considering loan words, even if native speakers are not aware of it. There are also strong and weak vowels, in the sense that some vowels disappear when meeting another vowel and two words end up sounding like one.

**Table 3.** *Vowels in Romanian*

Sign	Example	Observations
<b>a</b>	amar	
<b>e</b>	elev	
<b>i</b>	iris	
<b>i scurt</b>	câini, bărbați	in plurals
<b>o</b>	ocol	
<b>u</b>	uluc	
<b>ă</b>	fără	initially a short a
<b>î, â</b>	vârî	
<b>ö</b> very rarely	bleu, löss	in loan words
<b>ü</b> very rarely	führer, bruxelez	in loan words

The vowel hierarchy when two words meet:

A – O – I – do not disappear U – E – Ă – Î – can disappear

Să închidă – să-nchidă

Să a dus – s-a dus

Să îi spună – să-i spună

Îi e ( ie ) cald – i-i cald

Mi-e ( ie ) sete – mi-i sete

Bineînțele – bine-nțele

## Linguistic patterns in Romanian

Language teaching has long considered so-called patterns, namely ways of combining words and expressions as a method to achieve a communication as close as possible to a native. This type of learning is not very deep, as it does not seek to understand the structure of the language but is effective for quick, intensive classes. The patterns that will be discussed below are not the same as those used so far in teaching. They are morphological and phonetic, mostly related to the structure of the language and aim for achieving a deep knowledge of grammar, by understanding its inner workings. Each language has its own morphological and phonetic patterns, making this method adaptable to any structure. The analysis is based on comparative linguistics, some discoveries in neurolinguistics (learning based on morphemes) and didactics.

Romanian is an extremely phonetic language, with few absolute rules and many noticeable patterns in verbs, nouns and adjectives, without which the language seems chaotic for a non-native. The most effective method of presenting them to adult learners so far has been in tables that highlight the connections between various parts of speech. These tables are to be used in teaching to highlight the similarities between the main parts of speech and the corresponding patterns in gender and number for nouns and adjectives and conjugations for verbs.

### *The patterns of Romanian nouns and adjectives*

The relation between genders nouns and their plural is shown in Figure 2 as expressions of phonetic laws and not linguistic patterns. The pattern method can be used when connecting the nouns to adjectives and declensions. The adjective is always connected to a noun, so it reflects the phonetic laws and patterns of the former, only simplified. The most stable pattern is found in masculine nouns and adjectives, where a consonant ending

is the most common and a plural in ‘-i’ is a rule. The next most reliable pattern is in feminine nouns and adjectives that end in ‘-ă’. The most confusing ending is ‘-e’, because it is shared by both genders and it can appear in singulars and plurals as well. Neutrals are not included in this template as they behave either like singular masculine nouns or feminine plural nouns and any adjective attributed to them will defer to those rules.

**Table 4.** *Patterns in Romanian for nouns and adjectives*

Number	Gender	Typical noun ending	Typical adjective ending
Singular	Masculine	consonant	consonant/ e
	Feminine	- ă/ a	- ă/ e
Plural	Masculine	- i	- i
	Feminine	- i/ e	- e

The declension in the Genitive-Dative case also follows some clear patterns, namely the addition of the third person possessive pronoun as a suffix for all genders and numbers. This pronoun has two forms for third person but only one is used. Thus, if a person knows the possessive pronoun, they will be able to create a Genitive-Dative. As many European languages but not only, have no real notion of what a declension is, this template is very useful in showing how nouns decline and what it means.

**Table 5.** *Nouns in Genitive with article and adjective*

Masc sg	Casa băiatului	<b>-lui</b>	Casa <b>lui</b> Mihai	noun + adj	Casa băiatului albastru
Fem sg	Casa mamei	<b>-ei</b>	Casa Anei		Casa mamei <b>albastre</b>
Fem sg	Casa pisicii	<b>-ii</b>		adj. sg fem = adj fem pl	Casa pisicii <b>albastre</b>
Masc + Fem pl	Casa pisicilor	<b>-lor</b>			Casa băieților albaștri
					Casa pisicilor <b>albastre</b>
Masc sg + art	Casa unui băiat				
Fem sg + art	Casa unei <b>pisici</b>		fem sg = fem pl		
Masc pl + art	Casa unor băieți				
Fem pl + art.	Casa unor <b>pisici</b>				

When it comes to possessive pronouns in the Genitive case, a curious phenomenon appears. There is only one declension only for the second person feminine, singular. The feminine singular form is replaced by the plural feminine form in the Genitive case (Table 6). It is very possible that at an earlier stage of the language there was a declension for all forms of the pronoun, which has been preserved only in this case. This pattern also applies to feminine, singular nouns and adjectives that take the plural form in Genitive.

**Table 6. Romanian Genitive pronouns**

Pronoun	Gender	Nominative	Genitive	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.
Singular	Masculin	Meu	Meu	Tău	Tău	Lui	Lui
	Feminin	Mea	<b>Mele</b>	Ta	<b>Tale</b>	Ei	Ei
Plural	Masculin	Mei	Mei	Tăi	Tăi	Lor	Lor
	Feminin	Mele	<b>Mele</b>	<b>Tale</b>	<b>Tale</b>	Lor	Lor
Singular	Masculin	Nostru	Nostru	Vostru	Vostru	Său	Său
	Feminin	Noastră	<b>Noastre</b>	Voastră	<b>Voastre</b>	Sa	Sale
Plural	Masculin	Noștri	Noștri	Voștri	Voștri	Săi	Săi
	Feminin	Noastre	<b>Noastre</b>	<b>Voastre</b>	<b>Voastre</b>	Sale	Sale

### ***Romanian verbs***

Romanian verbs are taught in native schools as belonging to 4 groups, with 4 conjugations, depending on their ending. This division is false, verbs in Romanian are divided into up to 13 groups, with several exceptions, a division that has not been analyzed and presented in textbooks so far. This is not important for natives who already know the language, but it is crucial for non-natives who study Romanian as a foreign language. For them, the 4 initial groups are not enough, a large part of the verbs do not fit into any of them and the conjugation in the present tense seems chaotic. Verbs can really be divided into groups depending on the ending, but considering many more types of endings, not just the last letter. Sometimes verbs are grouped based on their last two letters and two diphthongs ‘-ea’ and ‘-ia’. These diphthongs are considered one sound due to the Slavic influence and were represented by one letter in Cyrillic. The most difficult Romanian tense in the present, where verbal groups are crucial while other tenses are much easier to construct. The verb templates are very useful for students in identifying the correct conjugation. If they manage to memorize one conjugation from each group, they can later follow the same patterns when learning new verbs and the teacher must only tell them which already known verb they resemble.

### ***Romanian verbs in the present tense***

In the templates below, the verb groups have been divided according to their conjugation patterns, highlighting similarities and differences by showing how the ending for each person stays the same or changes. Throughout all the verb groups, the most consistent patterns are an ‘-i’ ending for the second person singular (‘tu’), ‘-m’ for the first-person plural (‘noi’), ‘-ți’ for the second person plural (‘voi’). These are also the easiest to learn for non-natives.

**Table 7. Verbal group A**

	Ending					
Infinitive	eu	tu	el/ ea	noi	voi	ei/ele
A cânta	none	- i	- ă	- ăm	- ați	- ă
A tăcea	none	- i	- e	- em	- eți	none
A merge	none	- i	- e	- em	- eți	none
A ieși	none	- i	- e	- im	- iți	none
A coborî	none	- i	- oară	- îm	- iți	- oară

**Table 8. Verbal group B**

A dansa	-ez	-ezi	-cază	-ăm	-ați	-cază
A studia	-ez	-ezi	-iază	-iem	-iați	-iază

**Table 9. Verbal group C**

A vorbi (-ui, -ti, -mi, -ni, -bi, -pi, -di, -ri)	-esc	-ești	-ește	-im	-iți	-esc
A hotărî	-ăsc	-ăști	-ăște	-ăm	-ați	-ăsc

**Table 10. Verbal group D**

A mârâi*	-âi	-âi	-âie	-âim	-âiți	-âie
A ronțâi	-âi	-âi	-âie	-âim	-âiți	-âie

*\*the letter â was introduced in Romanian during the 90s, before this sound was written*

*\*î everywhere, a form that shows its phonetic connection to \*i*

**Table 11. Verbal subgroups A1**

A bea	Inf + u	-i	Inf	-em	-eți	Inf + u
A vrea	Inf + u	-i	Inf	-em	-eți	vor
A intra	Inf + u	-i	-ă	-ăm	-ați	-ă
A sta	Inf + u	Inf + i	-ă	-ăm	-ați	Inf + u

The Conjunctive in Romanian corresponds to the Subjunctive from the other Latin languages and is considered as a distinct mood due to a single change that appears in the present tense. A small change is made to the third person singular and plural, representing a remnant of a complete subjunctive that once existed in the language, a consideration also supported by the particle that introduces it: ‘să’ from ‘ca să’.

**Table 12. Patterns in the conjunctive mood**

Infinitive	Third person present	Third person conjunctive
A merge	merge	Să meargă
A cânta	cântă	Să cante
A bea	bea	Să bea

Creating a Romanian past participle is much easier than the creating the present tense, as the verbs can be divided into three verbal groups, depending on the ending, to which a letter or two is added. The only exception is the verb to be. There are only three types of endings for the past participle, the most difficult being the one that requires the correct identification of a group of letters such as ‘ge’ / ‘de’ / ‘ne’ / ‘ie’. It must be noted that the prescribed endings follow patterns and not rules, so there are going to be exceptions. The ‘-t’ / ‘-d’ ending seems to be prevalent in many Indo-European languages, for example English, German, Spanish, Italian – compare ‘studied’ / ‘learnt’ (Eng.) – ‘studiert’ (Ger.) – ‘estudiado’ (Sp.) – ‘studiato’ (It.).

*Table 12. Past participle*

A cânta A citi A hotărî	-t	Cântat Citit Hotărât
A tăcea A cere	-ut	Tăcut Cerut
A merge A deschide A spune A scrie	-s	Mers Deschis Spus Scriș

## Conclusion

The method of teaching Romanian grammar through phonetical and morphological patterns can be used from the beginner level, up to advanced, with any nationality and native language. Some languages will prove closer to Romanian when it comes to pronunciation and grammatical structures, like the other Romance languages and some Slavic ones. However, it is not the relation between languages that makes this method useful and successful, but its logical and practical approach. The patterns can be presented as additional material to other workbooks, to be consulted whenever there is a need. By following the examples offered in them, the students can learn the pattern and apply it themselves, whether that be in nouns, verbs, adjectives, declensions, and pronouns. Learning thus occurs intuitively, through a repetition that does not seem tedious but practical. The exceptions that are not covered by these patterns will be memorized as such by contrasting them with the norm. Genders, plurals, Genitives, and conjugations are easier to master by constantly checking a reference sheet. This suits very well the intensive classes that are usually taken by adult student who typically does not have the time and resources to invest in a long-term study. The shortest study modules

for adult learners range from two weeks to three months, depending on how many hours per week are devoted to the classes and the longest are from six months to two years, the latter being quite rare. The immigration that Romania sees is not always permanent but transitory, so expats are not so interested in investing years in language studies. They prefer shorter, more focused classes that can create a basis for future learning.

The method of phonetical and morphological patterns can be applied to any language, of any linguistic family to logically structure grammar and create connections between various parts of speech. Comparative language pattern templates can also be made between related languages, to highlight their commonalities and differences and to help native speakers of one of them to learn the other. Romanian can be compared to Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese to start with and even with some Slavic languages from the phonetical point of view. Furthermore, due to their belonging to the Indo-European linguistic family, most modern European languages are grammatically connected and show many similarities. Research into common patterns and similarities can be very useful for language teaching and learning as they translate easily into pedagogical methods. The overreaching goal in this instance is to manage to simplify often complex and complicated linguistic phenomena and to make learning languages easier, efficient and practical.

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# Abateri de la normă în producțiile scrise ale studenților care studiază limba română ca limbă străină. Nivel A2

GOGĂȚĂ CRISTINA<sup>1</sup>

**Rezumat.** Articolul de față reprezintă continuarea unei cercetări în care au fost analizate abaterile de la norma lingvistică în producțiile scrise a două grupe de studenți care învață limba română ca limbă străină, la finalul anului al doilea de studiu, an preclinic, în care studenții nu au contact cu pacienții români. În această lucrare sunt comparate abaterile de la normă de la finalul anului al doilea (preclinic) cu cele de la începutul anului al treilea (clinic), la patru săptămâni după ce studenții încep să interacționeze cu pacienții români. Sarcinile de lucru au fost similare: la prima evaluare, studenților li s-a cerut formularea de întrebări de anamneză pentru răspunsurile pacientului, iar pentru a doua evaluare studenții au avut de tradus întrebări de anamneză din limba engleză în limba română. Ipoteza de la care am pornit a fost că, deși studenții sunt motivați să învețe RLS și în anii precliniци, acuratețea în exprimare se câștigă mult mai rapid prin interacțiunea cu vorbitorii nativi de limba română. Motivația extrinsecă a avut aceeași intensitate – examen scris, respectiv, evaluare pe parcurs, iar intervalul de timp dintre cele două evaluări (înțeles ca perioadă în care studenții vorbesc limba română, în context academic) a fost relativ scurt, așadar progresul datorat exersării limbii în cadrul instituțional a tins spre zero. Rezultatele analizei comparative reflectă dezvoltarea acurateții în exprimare, în cazul tuturor studenților, prin scăderea numărului de abateri de la norma lingvistică, în cazul evaluării din perioada clinică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *RLS, analiză cantitativă, analiza erorilor, abatere, normă lingvistică.*

## Aspecte teoretice

Limba română ca limbă străină (RLS) are o tradiție îndelungată în mediul universitar românesc, în special în cadrul Universităților de Medicină. În privința studenților Universității de Medicină și Farmacie „Iuliu Hațieganu”, din Cluj-Napoca, cea mai mare provocare o constituie utilizarea limbii române în contextul dialogurilor cu pacienții, în mediul spitalicesc. Cum un număr mic de studenți optează pentru anul pregătitor, pentru a-și

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însuși limba română, sarcina profesorilor de limba română ca limba străină este una complexă, deoarece limba română se studiază în primii trei ani de facultate, 3 ore pe săptămână (Facultatea de Medicină) sau 4 ore pe săptămână (Facultatea de Medicină Dentară). În cazul Facultății de Farmacie, limba română se studiază în primii doi ani, pentru două ore pe săptămână. Astfel, în primul an este vizată însușirea noțiunilor de limbaj general și de gramatică specifice nivelului A1, conform CECRL (CECRL, 2003). Începând cu anul al doilea, deja sunt introduse elemente de vocabular medical, alături de competențele lingvistice specifice nivelului A2, urmând ca în anul al treilea procesul de predare-învățare să se axeze strict pe latura medicală și pe contexte de comunicare medic-pacient, cu un nivel-țintă de limbă B1.

Pentru nivelul A2 (nivel-țintă la finalul anului al doilea), corectitudinea gramaticală implică utilizarea corectă a unor structuri simple, alături de comiterea în mod sistematic a unor erori elementare ca, de exemplu, confuzia de timpuri și uitarea acordului, cu păstrarea unui sens general clar (CECRL, 2003, p. 95). În ceea ce privește volumul lingvistic general, nivelul A2 vizează următoarele:

Stăpânește un repertoriu lingvistic elementar ce-i permite să se descurce în situații curente cu conținut previzibil, deși are în general nevoie să-și caute cuvintele și să găsească un compromis în raport cu intențiile sale de comunicare.

Poate produce scurte expresii curente pentru a răspunde unor necesități simple de tip concret: detalii personale, obișnuințe zilnice, dorințe și nevoi, cereri de informație. Poate folosi modele de fraze elementare și comunica cu ajutorul unor fraze memorizate, a unor grupuri din câteva cuvinte și îmbinări de cuvinte stabile, despre sine, oameni, ceea ce fac, bunurile lor etc. Stăpânește un repertoriu limitat de expresii scurte memorizate ce acoperă primele necesități vitale ale unor situații previzibile; se iscă rupturi frecvente și neînțelegeri în situațiile neprevăzute. (CECRL, 2003, p. 92)

În procesul de achiziție a oricărei limbi L2, volumul lingvistic general și competența gramaticală sunt esențiale în competența de exprimare (Pilar, 2011; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Bogaards & Laufer, 2004; Pavii Taka, 2008). Unii cercetători consideră că studiul achiziției vocabularului poate fi relaționat cu ordinea achiziției diferitelor tipuri de cunoștințe (morfologice, sintactice, colocaționale, semantice etc.), cu ordinea de achiziție a claselor gramaticale, cu ordinea de achiziție a diverși itemi lexicali și cu stadiile de dezvoltare în procesarea lexicală:

Din această perspectivă, studiul achiziției de vocabular poate avea mai multe dimensiuni: (1) ordinea de achiziție a tipurilor de cunoștințe (morfologice, sintactice, colocaționale, semantice etc.) pentru fiecare item lexical, (2) ordinea de achiziție a claselor morfologice (substantiv, verb, adverb, adjectiv etc.), (3) ordinea de achiziție a itemilor lexicali specifici și (4) stadiile de dezvoltare a procesării lexicale. (Augustín Llach, 2011, p. 5, trad. mea)

Cercetători precum Stuart Webb și Paul Nation ierarhizează cuvintele în funcție de frecvență, în patru categorii: cu frecvență ridicată, cu frecvență scăzută, tehnice și academice (Webb & Nation, 2017, p. 27). Din această perspectivă, studenții mediciniști trebuie să opereze, în limba română, atât cu elemente lexicale de frecvență înaltă, cât și cu cele tehnice, dat fiind specificul comunicării în mediul spitalicesc. Studii de specialitate arată că frecvența apariției unui cuvânt este proporțională cu șansele ca acest cuvânt să fie reținut (Milton & Alexiou, 2009). Pe de altă parte, studenții își însușesc și un număr foarte mare de termeni tehnici și academici în limba engleză sau franceză, în cadrul celorlalte discipline, astfel că limba română este într-o permanentă concurență cu limba engleză sau cu limba franceză, în funcție de linia de studiu pentru care optează studenții. În plus, cercetările arată că există un raport de proporționalitate directă între nivelul de stăpânire a limbii materne și abilitățile de a-și însuși o limbă L2 (Ganschow et al., 1998, p. 248). Or, limba română fiind însușită ca limbă L3, prin intermediul limbii engleze, eventualele discrepante cauzate de nivelurile diferite de însușire a L1 (limba maternă) în L2 (limba de studiu) se adâncesc, în procesul de achiziție a L3 (limba română).

În analiza erorilor din producțiile scrise ale studenților mediciniști, am optat pentru taxonomia cu care operează Carl James, care identifică cinci categorii de erori în achiziția L2: omisiunea, adăugarea, formarea eronată, ordinea greșită și amestecurile (James, 2013, p. 106-113). Dintre cele cinci categorii, cele mai frecvente sunt cele de formare eronată și amestecuri (la nivel lexical), de adăugare, amestecuri și de formare eronată, la nivel morfologic (dubla articulare a substantivelor, formarea eronată a cazului genitiv, conjugarea în altă paradigmă a verbelor), iar la nivel sintactic persistă erorile de adăugare, precum calchierea timpului prezent continuu, din limba engleză, care nu are corespondent în limba română și cele de ordine greșită, în special cele de menținere a topicii specifice enunțurilor interogative din limba engleză, cu inversiunea subiect – predicat. În această privință, cercetătorii estimează că aproximativ o treime dintre propozițiile deviante sunt cauzate de interferența limbii materne (Richards & Sampson, 2014, p. 5).

## Metodologie

În cercetarea de față am comparat producțiile scrise de la finalul anului al doilea cu testele parțiale de la începutul celui de-al treilea an de studiu, la 4-5 săptămâni după ce studenții au început interacțiunea cu pacienții vorbitori nativi de română.

Sarcinile de lucru au fost similare: la examenul de la finalul anului al doilea, studenții au formulat întrebările pentru zece posibile răspunsuri ale pacienților, iar la testul parțial de la începutul anului al treilea studenții au

avut de tradus 20 de întrebări de anamneză, din limba engleză în limba română. Corpusul include lucrările studenților din două grupe de la Facultatea de Medicină, linia de studiu engleză. În total, este vorba de 39 de studenți, însă doar producțiile a 32 dintre ei sunt luate în considerare:

- Anul al doilea: 36 de studenți, dintre care 5 vorbitori nativi, 3 cu an pregătitor, 4 plecați;
- Anul al treilea: 35 de studenți, dintre care 5 vorbitori nativi, un student cu an pregătitor, 3 veniți.

S-au luat în considerare lucrările studenților vorbitori nativi și ale celor cu an pregătitor, dar nu au putut fi luate în considerare lucrările studenților veniți, respectiv ale celor plecați, deoarece nu se poate realiza comparația între cele două producții scrise. În ceea ce privește limba maternă a studenților, doi sunt vorbitori de italiană, unul este vorbitor de engleză, doi de arabă și 27 de germană. Pentru lucrările de la finalul anului al doilea, studenții au trebuit să formuleze întrebări pentru următoarele posibile răspunsuri ale pacientului:

#### **Setul A1**

1. Mă numesc Ion Popescu.
2. Locuiesc pe strada Fabricii.
3. Nu, sunt divorțat.
4. Mă doare capul, tușesc și am febră.
5. Am avut rujeolă și oreion.
6. Am 1.70.
7. Mama suferă de diabet, iar tata de hipertensiune.
8. Iau Ibuprofen, când mă doare capul.
9. Am doi copii.
10. Nu am fost internat niciodată.

#### **Setul B1**

1. Am alergie la polen.
2. Un pachet de țigări pe zi.
3. De o săptămână.
4. Ocazional, o bere, când ies în oraș cu prietenii.
5. Sunt pensionar.
6. Am 80 de kg.
7. Am diabet, de 5 ani.
8. Locuiesc singur.
9. Este un bloc vechi, e friguros și avem igrasie.
10. Am fost operat de apendicită, în copilărie.

Pentru testul de la începutul anului al treilea, studenții au avut de tradus din engleză în română următoarele întrebări:

#### **Setul A2**

1. Could you spell your name for me?
2. What is bothering you?
3. How tall are you?

4. Do you know if you have other conditions?
5. Do you have brothers or sisters? What health problems do they have?
6. Did you have the childhood diseases (measles, chickenpox, mumps)?
7. Do you have sleep disorders?
8. Did you lose your consciousness?
9. Are you taking any medicine? Which type?
10. Do you smoke? How many cigarettes a day?
11. Do you have a stressful job?
12. Which body part hurts?
13. Do you have other signs or symptoms associated with the pain?
14. Is it better when you lie down?
15. Does your throat hurt when you swallow?
16. When you have chest pain, does your head hurt too?
17. Are you bloated?
18. Have you noticed a different color/smell in the urine?
19. Do you feel that your breasts swell?
20. Are you experiencing memory loss?

#### **Setul B2**

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. How much do you weigh?
4. How may I help you?
5. What health problems did your parents suffer from?
6. Did you have the childhood diseases (measles, chickenpox, mumps)?
7. Do you have kids? Are they healthy?
8. Did you have any surgery?
9. Are you taking any medicine? Which type?
10. Do you smoke? How many cigarettes a day?
11. Do you breathe heavily when you climb the stairs?
12. Did you lose/gain weight lately?
13. How often do you take this medicine?
14. What do you usually drink?
15. Do you live alone or with your family?
16. Are you retired?
17. Where did you first notice the pain?
18. Does the pain spread?
19. Do your gums bleed?
20. How is your cholesterol?

După cum se poate observa, testul de la începutul anului al treilea are un grad de dificultate mai mare decât cel de la finalul anului al doilea, deoarece cuprinde douăzeci de întrebări, iar vocabularul vizat este mai complex. Pe de altă parte, provocarea majoră pentru examenul de la finalul anului al doilea a constatat în înțelegerea răspunsurilor pacientului, sarcina de lucru vizând și competența de receptare scrisă. Totuși, studenții au avut posibilitatea să exerseze și să învețe întrebările, atât prin jocurile de rol medic-pacient din timpul cursurilor, cât și prin consultarea anexelor din suporturile de curs în care există un inventar cu întrebările din anamneza medicală.

## Analiza rezultatelor

Majoritatea rezultatelor reflectă o creștere a notelor studenților, după cum se poate observa din tabelul de mai jos: 12 studenți din 32 au obținut note mai mici la al doilea test, față de 19 care au obținut note mai mari, un singur student a obținut aceeași notă. 13 studenți au obținut note mai mari cu cel puțin un punct la al doilea test, în vreme ce doar cinci studenți au obținut note mai mici cu mai mult de un punct. Media primului test este 7.84, față de media celui de-al doilea test, 8.34, adică o creștere de aproape 0.5.

*Tabel 1. Comparație rezultate teste*

Student	Nota an II	Nota an III	Interpretare
1	4	6	+2
2	9.5	8.4	-1.1
3	3	7.8	+4.8
4	8	9.4	+1.4
5	6	9.2	+3.2
6	8	9.2	+1.2
7	9	9.6	+1.6
8	8	9.1	+1.1
9	7	6.3	-0.7
10	9.5	9.5	0
11	6	7	+1
12	7	7.6	+0.6
13	5	9.3	+4.3
14	10	9.5	-0.5
15	9.5	9.6	+0.1
16	10	8.9	-1.1
17	9	7.7	-1.3
18	9	6.3	-2.7
19	8	8.3	+0.3
20	7	4.6	-2.4
21	9	9.4	+0.4
22	5.5	6.9	+1.4
23	4.5	5.9	+1.4
24	10	9.8	-0.2
25	5	5.6	+0.6
26	9	8.4	-0.6
27 (AP*)	9	9.3	+0.3
28 (VN**)	8.5	9.7	+1.2
29 (VN)	10	9.8	-0.2
30 (VN)	10	9.7	-0.3
31 (VN)	10	9.5	-0.5
32 (VN)	8	9.6	+1.6
<b>Media</b>	<b>7.84375</b>	<b>8.340625</b>	<b>+0.496875</b>

\* AP = student(ă) cu an pregătitor; \*\* VN = vorbitor nativ.

Analiza rezultatelor vizează inventarierea abaterilor semnificative de la norma lingvistică pe trei niveluri: lexical, morfologic și sintactic. Se

observă că cele mai frecvente abateri de la normă sunt la nivel morfo-lexical. Nivelul sintactic interesează prezenta cercetare în măsura în care pot fi identificate și, implicit, corectate, anumite structuri sintactice parazitare preluate din limba maternă și transferate în limba țintă. După cum se poate observa în analiza care urmează, abaterile de la normă de natură sintactică sunt oricum puține, dată fiind și natura sarcinilor de lucru: întrebările și răspunsurile pe care studenții trebuie să le producă sunt scurte și simple, specifice comunicării medicale.

### **Setul A1 (17 răspunsuri)**

Abateri semnificative de natură lexicală<sup>2</sup>: „boli ale copilăriei/infecțioase” (- \*4, *niște vaccinare*), „care” (*cât*), „vreun” (*orice*), „cu ce (vă pot ajuta)” (*cum ce, ce*), „dumneavoastră” (*voștri* \*2, *vostru, tea, voi, vă*), „vreodată/înainte” (*în timpul trecut, o dată, înapoi*), „boli/afecțiuni” (*condiții*), „sunteți căsătorit” (-, *aveți o femeie* \*2, *aveți o femei, aveți o femeie, aveți călătorit*), „înălțime” (*greutate, sunteți mare*), „pe care” (*cine*), „sunteți” (*aveți* \*2), „aveți” (*sunteți*), „de câte ori” (*cât timpul, câte ore*), „pentru ce” (*pentru că*), „probleme de sănătate” (*probleme sănătos*).

Abateri semnificative de natură morfologică: „starea dvs” (*stare dvs*), „părinții dvs” (*părinți dvs* \*2), „sănătatea părinților” (*sănătate părinților*), „în familia dvs” (*în familie dvs*), „(probleme) cu tensiunea” (*cu tensiune*), „o femeie” (*o femeie* \*2), „în spital” (*în spitalul*), „ce simptome” (*ce simptomele*), „(luați) medicamente” (*medicamentele* \*3), „o soție” (*o soție*), „în familie” (*în/pe familie*), „căsătorit” (*căsătorii* \*2), „singur” (*singuri*), „(ei sunt) sănătoși” (*sănătos*), „boli cunoscute” (*boli cunoscută*), „vreo boală” (*vreun boală* \*2, *vreo boli* \*2, *o bolnavă, boala*), „vreun medicament” (*vreo medicamente* \*2), „vreo” (-, *o*), „ați avut” (*ați*), „cât de înalt” (*cât/ce înalt, câte de metri* \*2, *cât metri, cât te inhalt, câte cm*), „locuiți” (*locuiști, vă locuiști, vă locuiți, locuieste*), „ați fost” (*aveți fost* \*4, *ai fost*), „ați avut” (*a avut, aș aveți, ați*), „ați luat” (*aveți luat*), „(ei) sunt” (*sunteți* \*2, *suntem*), „au” (*aveți*), „luați” (*iau*), „cum vă numiți/cheamă” (*vă numești/numește/cum cheamă/ce vă numiți, ce vă numesc tău*), „vă ajut/vă pot ajuta” (*v-ați ajuta*), „probleme de sănătate” (*problema cu sănătate*), „ați fost internat” (*ați fost la internat* \*2, *aveți internat, mergeți pe internat*), „de câte ori” (*câte ori*), „unde (locuiți)” (*de unde locuiți*).

<sup>2</sup> În analiza abaterilor de la normă, între ghilimele sunt date structurile lingvistice așteptate, eventual completate de termeni care să definească mai clar contextul, între paranteze. După structurile dintre ghilimele urmează, între paranteze, abaterile identificate în producțiile studenților. Semnul \* urmat de o cifră semnaleză numărul total de abateri identice. Între paranteze drepte sunt date cuvintele/structurile pe care studenții au intenționat să le scrie, atunci când nu reiese clar din context. Acolo unde cuvântul/structura lipsește, apare semnul -.

Abateri semnificative de natură sintactică: *ce condiții medicale părinții voștri au; sunteți părinții voștri sănătoși; care stări vaccinare este; care probleme sănătos părinți aveți; ce aveți problemă azi.*

### Setul B1 (15 răspunsuri)

Abateri semnificative de natură lexicală: „alergie la” (*alergie de/pe*), „dumneavoastră” (*vă, ta, voastră* \*3), „diabetic” (*diabet*), „greutate [înălțime]” (*încălțăminte*), „vreo (operație/boală/alergie)” (- \*6, *o* \*3, *un* \*2), „beți” (*băieți*), „aveți” (*sunteți*), „care (este)” (*ce* \*4), „ce (operații)” (*care*), „dacă” (*când*).

Abateri semnificative de natură morfologică: „câte țigări/pachete” (*caț/cât țigări/pachet* \*6, *câti pachete, ce mult țigări, de câte de*), „câte (kg)” (*ce/cât* \*3, *cati, câte de*), „ce (înălțime)” (*câți încălțăminte*), „de cât timp/de când” (*cât(e) timpul* \*3, *de cât* \*2, *de cât timpul*), „cât de mult” (*ce mult/câte mult*), „cât de des/de câte ori” (*câti ori, cât de ori*), „fumați” (*fumezi, luați, fumeți*), „lucrați” (*aveți lucrează, lucreți*), „locuiți” (*locuiești* \*3, *locuiesc, locuiți, sunteți*), „aveți” (*ați, sunteți* \*2), „ați fost” (*aveți fost*), „ați lucrat” (*aveți lucrat*), „complicații medicale” (*complicație medicale*), „vreo alergie” (*vreun alergie* \*2), „vreo operație” (*vreun operație*), „(cum este) situația” (*situație*), „cu familie” (*cu familia* \*2), „(spuneți-mi) greutatea” (*greutate*), „(de când aveți) simptomele” (*simptome*), „(ce) simptome” (*simptomele* \*2), „aveți alergii” (*aveți alergie*), „probleme respiratorii” (*problema cu respiratori*), „(sunteți) pensionar” (*sunteți o pensionar* \*2), „intervenție chirurgicală” (*intervenție chirurgicale*), „boli cronice” (*boale chronice*), „bloc nou” (*bloc noi*), „(vre)o operație” (*o operația*).

Abateri semnificative de natură sintactică: *ce vă [dumneavoastră] lucrați; este blocul nou; dacă [dacă da], de când; de cât timp aveți le.*

### Setul A2 (15 răspunsuri)

Abateri semnificative de natură lexicală: structura „(a spune) pe litere” (- \*3, *puteți să literă*), „dacă” (*si, că* \*4, *ce, da*), „când” (*si*), „a leșina” (*ați leniștat*), „tip” (*tipar*), „gât” (*gurtă, gură*), „ați observat” (*ați noticit*), „miros” (*mișor, odour*, - \*5), „(sânii) umflați” (- \*4, *îngresată, grandeliți, umflamații*), „sânii” (*sonorii*), „rujeolă” (- \*10), „varicelă” (- \*11), „oreion” (- \*15), „stați întins” (- \*4, *mergeți în patul, sunteți în pat, suspine, știți*), „v-ați pierdut cunoștința” (- \*2), „parte a corpului” (- \*2, *corporului*), „înghițiți” (*mâncați* \*2, - \*2), „pierderi de memorie” (- \*4, *pierdere gândi, cunoștința*), „înălțime” (*centimetri* \*2), „surori” (- \*3, *soari, sosuri*), „frați” (*față*), „cunoștința” (*conștienta, conștiința*), „boli” (-, *condiții*), stresant (*stresat*),

balonat (*balonare* \*2), „bine” (*bun*), „ce” (*care, câte*), „dumneavoastră” (*lor*), „alte (probleme)” (*altceva*).

Abateri semnificative de natură morfologică: „v-ați pierdut (cunoștința)” (*ați pierdut* \*3), „spuneți” (*spune* \*2), „toate detaliile” (*toate detalii*), „(probleme) cu somnul” (*cu somn*), „(mergeți) în pat” (*în patul*), „(durere) în gât” (*în gâtul, durere gâtul, durerea gâtul*), „(durere) în piept” (*în pieptul* \*2, *durere pieptul* \*2, *durerele de la pieptul*), „(v-ați pierdut cunoștința)” (*cunoștință* \*3), „vă doare pieptul/capul” (*vă doare piept/cap* \*2), „(asociate cu) durerea” (*cu durere* \*3), „alte simptome” (*alte simptomele, alta simptomele*), „ce parte a corpului” (*care partul de corp, ce parte corpului* \*2, *ce part de corp, ce partea corpului, care partul corpului*), „bolile copilăriei” (*boli în copilarii, bolii copilii, boli copilăriei, bolile copilărie, bolii copilăriei*), „un miros” (*o miros*), „numele pe litere” (*literele numelui*), „să-mi spuneți numele” (*să spuneți numele dvs pentru mine*), „fumați” (*fumez, fumeți*), „puteți” (*putiți*), „au” (*are, aveți*), „doare” (*dor* \*3, *durerea*), „ați” (*aveți*), „aveți” (*ați* \*2), „ați avut” (*ați aveți*), „(când) vă culcați” (*când culcăte*), „ce înălțime” (*câte de centimentri, cât centimetri*), „câte țigări” (*câte de cigarette, cât țigări/țigarie/țigarette*), „foarte (stresantă)” (*multe stresat*), „o altă culoare” (*o alte culoare*), „o culoare diferită” (*o culoare diferite* \*2), „profesie stresantă” (*profesie stresante*), „sânii umflați” (*umflături sânilor* \*2, *umflături sâni*), „o profesie” (*o profesia*), „simptome asociate” (*simptome asociat* \*2, *simptome asociată, simptomele asociatele*), „(vreun) medicament” (*vreo medicamente(le), vreodată medicamente, mai medicamente*), „frați sau surori” (*frate sau surore, frațile sau sororile, frați sau soarire*).

Abateri semnificative de natură sintactică: *când ați durere pieptul, și vă dor capul; când vă doare pieptul, și vă doare capul* \*2.

### Setul B2 (17 răspunsuri)

Abateri semnificative de natură lexicală: „rujeolă” (- \*7), „varicelă” (- \*8, *gripă, poliomielită*), „oreion” (- \*11), „gingiile” (- \*3, *gingiva* \*3, *gâtul, gângăile, în gură, din dinți*), „pensionar” (-, *pensiune, oboseală*), „probleme de sănătate” (*probleme sănătoși*), „urcați (scările)” (-, *ascendeți, mergeți, mergeți un etaj/scările, curați, faceți scările, coboriți*), „ați slăbit/v-ați îngrășat” (- \*3, *ați slîmbat, ați lipsit kg, v-ați (în)grășit, îngreat, îngrășit*), „(durerea) iradiază” (*merge, se curumbește, răspește, de unde aveți doare, se ascumulează*), „sângerează” (- \*2, *aveți sângeri, e cu sânge, aveți givîngale sânge, sânge*), „acest” (*ceva*), „prima dată” (*primul* \*2, *de cât timp, în primul timp, înainte, înaint, prima timp, pe prima dată*), „în ultima vreme” (*în trecut* \*2), „de obicei” (*pe zi, des, încadată*), „vreo” (- \*4, *uneori*), „ce fel/tip” (*cine, care*), „cum” (*ce*), „dacă” (*că*), „greu” (*grav*).



Abateri semnificative de natură morfologică: „se răspândește” (*se răspândează*), „au avut” (*ați avut* \*2, *ați au*, *aveți* \*2), „sunteți (pensionar)” (*aveți*), „au suferit/au avut” (*va aua*), „când urcați scările” (*care tu merge la un etaj*), „beți” (*bea*), „locuiți” (*locuiste*), „v-ați îngrășat” (*ați grășit*, *ați îngrășat*), „fumați” (*fumeți* \*2), „vă doare” (*aveți doare*), „vă sângerează” (*aveți sânge*, *sângerări*, *sânge*), „cum stați cu” (*cum vă stați cu*, *știți cu*), „cum vă pot ajuta” (-, *cum ce vă pot ajuta*), „durerea” (*doare*), „cu colesterolul” (*cu colesterol* \*3), „cu familia” (*cu familie*), „pe scări” (*pe scările*), „(luați) medicamentul” (*medicamentului*), „țigări” (*țigare* \*2), „bolile copilăriei” (*boli/boale de copilari(e)* \*4, *boale copilăriei*, *boli(e) copilărie* \*3, *boli copilăriei*, *bolii de copil*, *bolii copilăriei*, *bolile copiilor*, *boli grave în copilărie* \*2), „câte (țigări)” (*de cât țigări*), „cât de des” (*de cât*, *de câte ore*), „acest (medicament)” (*această medicamente*), „(intervenție) chirurgicală” (*chirurgicale*), „probleme medicale” (*probleme de medicale*).

Abateri semnificative de natură sintactică: *ce probleme de sănătate au suferit părinții dvs* (\*3); *ce probleme de sănătate părinții dumneavoastră au avut*; *cholesterol analize*; *cât de des luați ceva medicamente* (\*3).

## Interpretarea rezultatelor

La nivel lexical, în setul A1 predomină confuziile dintre pronumele de politețe *dumneavoastră* și pronumele personal *voi/vă* sau posesivul *vostru*. Frecvente sunt și absența structurii *bolile copilăriei* (5 ocurențe) sau necunoașterea termenului *căsătorit* – 4 studenți care utilizează structura *aveți o femeie*, calchiere din limba germană. De asemenea, se observă confuzia frecventă a verbelor *a fi* și *a avea*, din cauza omonimiei formei *are* (engleză: *sunteți*; română: (el/ea) *are*). Și în setul B1 este frecventă confuzia pronumelui de politețe *dumneavoastră* cu forme ale pronumelui personal sau posesiv, dar în acest set se remarcă și confuzii frecvente ale pronumelor interogative *care* și *ce* – în număr de cinci, precum și nestăpânirea contextelor în care este necesară utilizarea adjectivului pronominal nehotărât *vreo* – 6 în care lipsește, 3 în care este înlocuit de articolul nehotărât.

Abaterile de natură morfologică sunt mai multe, cele mai importante fiind: neutilizarea articolului hotărât la substantivele urmate de determinant substantival în cazul genitiv, neutilizarea articolului hotărât la substantivele determinate de un adjectiv sau precedate de prepoziția *cu*, articularea substantivelor însoțite de prepoziții, dar fără alți determinanți, determinarea definită a substantivelor însoțite de adjectivul interogativ *ce* și a celor aflate pe poziția de complement direct nedefinit, dezacorduri în număr între substantiv și adjectivul care îl determină. În privința structurilor interogative, se remarcă tendința de a utiliza interogativul *cât* neacordat. Adjectivul

*vreun/vreo* este utilizat mai frecvent, dar nu la forma corectă și încă la concurență cu articolul nehotărât. Se remarcă și aici conjugări incorecte ale verbelor, în special în structura *cum vă cheamă/numiți?*, parazitată de *care e numele tău/dvs.?*. În setul B1 se observă aceeași nesiguranță în privința utilizării adjectivale a lui *cât* interogativ (22 de abateri de la normă), conjugări greșite ale verbelor *a lucra* și *a fuma*, confuzia *a fi/a avea*, dar și utilizarea formei de prezent a verbului *a avea* în locul auxiliarului de perfect compus sau – o singură abatere în acest set, dar recurentă în procesul de predare-învățare – calchierea timpului prezent continuu din limba engleză în limba română: *aveți lucrează* (*are you working*), evident, cu aceeași confuzie menționată anterior între *a fi* și *a avea*. Se mai remarcă și acordarea greșită a adjectivelor cu substantivele feminine care au terminația *-ie* la singular (*complicație medicală*, *intervenție chirurgicală*), preferința pentru *vreun*, în locul lui *vreo* (3 ocurențe), absența articolului nehotărât în structuri cu prepoziția *cu* sau pe poziția de subiect postpus ori de complement direct definit, utilizarea substantivelor determinate definit după adjectivul interogativ *ce*, preferința pentru articolul nehotărât în locul adjectivului *vreo*. De asemenea, deși cu o singură ocurență în acest caz, forma de plural *boale* este frecventă în procesul de învățare a limbii române de către studenții anglofoni.

Cea mai importantă diferență între cele două seturi de teste se observă în atitudinea față de limba țintă: numărul crescut de abateri de la norma lingvistică din testele de la începutul anului al treilea este o consecință directă a faptului că studenții nu se tem să încerce, pe baza cunoștințelor, să producă lexeme și structuri noi în limba română. Acest lucru e vizibil în special în structurile cu genitivul, unde plaja abaterilor este foarte extinsă, de la lipsa determinării definite a substantivului până la structuri „clasice” precum cele cu prepoziția *de* ca marcă a genitivului, posibil calc lingvistic din limba engleză (*a bottle of water* – *o sticlă de apă* vs *the color of the water* – *culoarea apei*).

Și la nivel lexical se observă apetitul pentru inovație lingvistică al studenților, în structuri calchiate precum *ați noticit* (*did you notice*), *grandeliți* (sp. *a mări* = *agrandar*), *odour* (en. *odour* = *miros*), *condiții* (en. *conditions* = *boli*, *afecțiuni*), *si* (sp. *si* = *dacă*), *ați slimbat* (en. *slim* – *slab*). De asemenea, tot la nivel lexical se observă multe confuzii paronimice: *leșinat* – *leniștat*; *miros* – *mișor*; *inflamați/umflați* – *umflamați*; *sâni* – *sonori*; *pensionar* – *pensiune*, *surori* – *sosuri*; *stresat* – *stresant*; *alte* – *altceva*; *frați* – *față*; *gură/burtă* – *gurtă*. Pe lângă apetența pentru invenția lingvistică, studenții jonglează cu structuri apropiate, în încercarea de a construi sensul și de a transmite mesajul: utilizarea verbului *a mânca* pentru *a înghiți*, a lui *a gândi*

pentru *memorie*, *a merge/a fi în pat* pentru *a sta culcat/întins*, *gură* pentru *gât* sau *conștiință* ori *conștiință* pentru *cunoștință*. Tot la acest nivel, persistă lacune în privința termenilor din sfera bolilor copilăriei, cele mai multe în privința termenului *oreion*, care nu are nicio legătură etimologică cu limba de studiu ori cu limba maternă a studenților (en. *mumps*, germ. *Mumps*, sp. *papera*, it. *orecchioni*, ar. النكاف (*al-nkāf*)). În total, termenul *oreion* lipsește din 26 de lucrări, *varicelă* din 19 lucrări, iar *rujeolă* din 17 lucrări.

La nivel morfologic, persistă în continuare regimul întrucâtva inversat al utilizării determinării definite la substantive: utilizarea substantivelor nedeterminate definit după prepoziția *cu*, după adjectivul pronominal *tot* ori pe poziția de subiect și, la polul opus, determinarea definită a substantivelor însoțite de prepoziții, dar fără determinanți. Genitivul în continuare este formulat incorect și persistă problemele în conjugarea și selectarea corectă a verbelor *a fi* și *a avea*, confuzia *ați/aveți*, precum și preferința pentru adjectivul interogativ *cât* la forma de masculin singular. Se remarcă și acordarea adjectivelor de feminin singular în *-e*, dacă substantivul se termină la feminin singular în *-e*: *culoare diferite*, *profesie stresante* sau determinarea definită și la adjectiv, și la feminin, în special în construcții cu adjectivul pronominal *alte* și/sau cu substantivul *simptome*: *altele simptomele*, *simptomele asociatele*. Un alt set de abateri – aparent nejustificat ca frecvență – constă în forme aproximative pentru structura *frați sau surori*, cuvinte care fac parte din vocabularul de bază și care, totuși, sunt rar scrise corect. Singura explicație pentru acest fapt ar fi că ele sunt intrate în vocabularul pasiv al studenților, din cauza accentului progresiv pus pe termenii medicali, începând cu anul al doilea de studiu al limbii române. Astfel, substantivul *surori* tinde să se apropie de *soare*: *surore*, *soarire*, *soari*, în vreme ce substantivul *frați* tinde să fie modelat după *soare*, cu predilecție pentru terminațiile în *-e*: *fratile*, *frate*. Și la acest nivel persistă nesiguranța în utilizarea adjectivelor *vreun/vreo* și confuziile în structurile interogative, în special între *care* și *ce*.

La nivel sintactic, se observă un plus de complexitate în formularea întrebărilor, cele mai semnificative abateri constând în elidarea prepoziției care însoțește interogativul (*de ce boli au suferit părinții dumneavoastră*), topică preluată din limba engleză (*colesterol analize*, în loc de *analize de colesterol*), utilizarea lui *și* adverbial pe prima poziție în regentă, nu antepus substantivalului (*când vă doare pieptul*, *și vă doare capul*, în loc de *vă doare și capul*) și structuri ambigue, cauzate de împletirea a două întrebări similare (*cât de des luați ceva medicamente*, în loc de *cât de des luați medicamente/ luați ceva medicamente*).

## Concluzii

Din analiza rezultatelor, este evident că studenții stăpânesc, în mare măsură, noțiunile de gramatică și elementele de vocabular, însă persistă ezitări și abateri de la normă în sfera unor elemente și noțiuni care ar trebui să facă parte din competențele minimale, în sfera lor de activitate socio-profesională, cum ar fi verbele *a fi* și *a avea* sau gradele de rudenie. Pentru a îmbunătăți competențele de exprimare orală și scrisă ale studenților, cel mai important și productiv exercițiu ar consta în utilizarea unui algoritm de repetiție<sup>3</sup>, în procesul de elaborare și de revizuire a materialelor didactice. Acest algoritm de repetiție ar fi foarte util, pentru că studenții și-ar revizui în permanență elementele de vocabular și de morfo-sintaxă în limba română, șansele ca acestea să intre în memoria de lungă durată crescând.

Deși percepția clasică este că, odată ce un set de elemente lingvistice a fost introdus și exersat, acesta ar trebui să facă parte din competențele de exprimare ale studentului, este important să ținem cont și de faptul că studenții primesc informații noi încontinuu, ceea ce îngreunează abilitatea lor de a lucra cu elemente lingvistice care nu au fost reluate de un an sau chiar mai mult. În plus, instruirea lor se realizează în limba engleză, astfel că și vocabularul din această limbă este îmbogățit în permanență cu elemente lexicale tehnice și academice, iar vocabularul din limba română este împins la periferie. Sarcina profesorului de limba română ca limbă străină este complicată și de faptul că, după doar doi ani de studiu al limbii române, studentul trebuie să fie capabil să utilizeze limba română în discuțiile cu pacienții, ceea ce înseamnă că elementele de vocabular medical deja sunt introduse de la începutul anului al doilea, împreună cu noțiuni gramaticale specifice nivelului A2, cum ar fi declinarea substantivelor comune în cazurile genitiv și dativ, adjectivele pronominale demonstrative, posesive, negative, nehotărâte, interogative și relative, pronumele personal în acuzativ și dativ, verbul la diateza reflexivă, verbe cu pronume în cazul dativ, numeralul ordinal și adverbial etc. (Platon et al., 2019, p. 37-50). Dat fiind specificul disciplinei, ar fi util ca elementele și structurile gramaticale specifice nivelului A1 să fie reiterate și în achiziția elementelor specifice nivelului A2, mai ales că primele se regăsesc în scenariile clasice de dialog medical și în realizarea anamnezei.

De asemenea, elementele medicale trebuie reîntărite pe același tipar, deoarece este evident că încă nu sunt apropiate de studenți. Acest lucru este

<sup>3</sup> Acest algoritm este utilizat în aplicații de învățare a limbilor străine, precum *Duolingo* (*spaced repetition algorithm*) și constă în „spargerea” (la nivel grafic, prin ciobirea imaginii, a) unor niveluri și seturi de exerciții, cursantul fiind invitat să revizuiască acele niveluri, pentru a le reface, după o anumită perioadă de timp de la parcurgerea lor. Astfel, șansele ca elementele lingvistice să intre în memoria de lungă durată cresc.

evident în special în absența unor elemente cruciale de vocabular medical precum *bolile copilăriei, varicelă, rujeolă, rubeolă, oreion*, în ciuda faptului că noțiunile în cauză au făcut parte din programa pentru ambele teste. Reluarea sistematică a elementelor de vocabular specifice nivelurilor A1 și A2, alături de exerciții simple de selectare a formei corecte sau completare cu forma adecvată ar fi soluții de corectare a dezacordurilor, de întărire a genurilor substantivelor sau de însușire a unor structuri cheie, frecvente, cu genitivul, în special în contextul concurenței dintre achiziția de vocabular tehnic și academic între limba de studiu (engleza) și limba-țintă (româna).

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# Principiul atracției universale în lingvistică.

## O foarte scurtă introducere

HORIA CĂPUȘAN<sup>1</sup>

**Rezumat.** Prezenta lucrare își propune să atragă atenția asupra unui fenomen pe deplin recunoscut în fonetică și uneori în morfo-sintaxă, dar mai puțin abordat în semantică – fenomenul „atrației universale a unităților lingvistice”. Fenomenul este pus în evidență cu ajutorul unor contexte numite „catalizatori”, ce constituie momente privilegiate ale forței de atracție lingvistică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *forță de atracție lingvistică, catalizator, efect de sens, izotopie.*

Într-o formulare cât se poate de generală, principiul atracției universale în lingvistică ar putea fi enunțat în felul următor: oricare două sau mai multe unități lingvistice (de orice nivel), în momentul în care vor fi puse împreună în cadrul unui context lingvistic, vor interacționa, producând un supliment de sens.

Pe lângă fenomenul atracției universale din fizică, conform căruia oricare două corpuri din univers produc între ele o forță de atracție gravitațională, această „atrație lingvistică” ar mai putea fi asemănată cu fenomenul magnetismului (fiecare corp se poate încărca cu un câmp magnetic din afară) sau cu fenomenul adaptării din ecologie, fenomen datorită căruia un organism aflat într-un mediu se va adapta în mod obligatoriu la acel mediu pentru a supraviețui.

**1.0.** Să vedem mai concret câteva exemple în care această „atrație” funcționează deosebit de clar:

„Cine depășește cele douăzeci de minute alocate comunicării sale este capabil de crime și mai mari.” (butadă atribuită matematicianului Grigore C. Moisil, comunicată de tatăl autorului, în care depășirea momentelor alocate comunicării este echivalată cu o crimă)

„The Dude: And, you know, he’s got emotional problems, man.  
Walter Sobchak: You mean... beyond pacifism?” (dialog din filmul *The Big Lebowski*, regia Joel and Ethan Coen, în care pacifismul este privit ca o „problemă emoțională”)

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„These guys from Åland, they were pirates. They basically lived from robbery.

Today you'd call them entrepreneurs.” (din ciclul de documentare Tareq Taylor, *The Secrets of Nordic Cookery*, în care implicația este că orice antreprenor e un tâlhar)

Dar nu numai unitățile lingvistice de nivel unu (lexemele) pot fi subiectele acestei „atracții”. Enunțurile, de asemenea, se supun aceluiași reguli:

„Soacra: Zău, copii, o să mă băgați în mormânt!

Nora: Măcar atâta lucru să facem și noi.” (din filmul *Monștri*, regia Marius Oltean. Un enunț precum „măcar atâta lucru să facem și noi” are ca presupuziție că acel „atâta lucru” este un fapt conotat pozitiv; în cazul de față, „a o băga pe soacră în mormânt” devine, deci, un fapt pozitiv.)

**2.0.** Acest „principiu al atracției universale în lingvistică” a fost recunoscut pe deplin într-un compartiment al lingvisticii precum fonetica; este un fapt banal acela că două foneme aflate unul lângă altul în lanțul vorbirii se vor modifica, ambele. De asemenea, în sintaxă este cunoscută de mult categoria anaforicelor și a cataforicelor, forme pronominale sau adverbiale care nu-și capătă sensul decât prin raportarea la alte unități sau secvențe de unități situate înainte sau după ele în lanțul vorbirii.

În cazul semanticii propriu-zise, însă, fenomenul a beneficiat de mult mai puțin studiu (chiar dacă este o banalitate lingvistică faptul că un cuvânt nu poate fi înțeles decât în context). Lucrarea de față încearcă să propună o foarte scurtă introducere în studiul acestui fenomen semantic al „atracției universale în lingvistică”.

**2.1.** Pentru a analiza mai îndeaproape acest fenomen cu contururi foarte largi, cea mai bună perspectivă de studiu este a porni de la ceea ce am putea numi „catalizatori” ai atracției lingvistice. Este vorba de acele unități lingvistice care, prin prezența lor, fac deosebit de sensibilă și prezența acestei atracții.

Un asemenea cuvânt „catalizator” este pronumele (fals nehotărât) *toți*, *toate*. Prin sensul pe care îl introduce, acesta proiectează ideea de totalitate asupra întregii categorii evocate în enunțul precedent:

„No, o murit amu și bou' lu' Iuân.

No, uite așe ne-am duce cu tății.” (toți = boi; comunicată de O. B., profesor de geografie la Grupul Școlar Agricol Turda)

Alte adjective de origine pronominală, precum *alți*, *alte*, au tendința să generalizeze o însușire, transferând-o și asupra secvențelor precedent

numite. Astfel, de exemplu, când poetul Octavian Soviany își intitulează al treilea volum de versuri *Alte poeme de modă veche*, el lasă să se înțeleagă că și celelalte două volume ale sale sunt tot „poeme de modă veche”.

**2.2.** Un caz dintre cele mai bine precizate este acela al numeralelor. Astfel, prezența unei serii crescătoare sau descrescătoare de numere asociate unei însușiri va tinde să generalizeze acea însușire în toată seria, chiar și când acest lucru nu este intenționat sau afirmat explicit:

„Un psihiatru îi prezintă unui vizitator așezământul pe care îl conduce:  
– La primul etaj sunt nebunii care sunt doar foarte puțin nebuni, numai cu „o păsărică”. La al doilea, sunt ăia care sunt deja mai nebuni. La al treilea, sunt cei care sunt nebuni bine, la al patrulea sunt nebunii de legat, iar la al cincilea e biroul meu.” (comunicată de Petre Vereșezan, elev la Liceul Militar „Mihai Viteazul” din Alba Iulia)

Nuvela *Sette piani*, scrisă de Dino Buzzati, este bazată tocmai pe un asemenea paralelism între numărul etajului și starea de sănătate a bolnavului: cu cât bolnavul coboară la un etaj inferior, cu atât starea lui se înrăutățește, până la moartea finală. Invers, în piesa lui Boris Vian, *Les Bâtisseurs d'empire*, creșterea în „statut existențial” corespunde cu urcarea la un etaj superior.

În mod analog, adjectivul de origine pronominală *alt* introduce același paralelism:

„Întrebat de ce bea atâta, profesorul Grigore C. Moisil ar fi răspuns:  
– Când beau mă simt un alt om. Și acest om are nevoie de altă sticlă.”  
(comunicată de S. B., profesor de franceză la UBB)

**2.3.** Un alt tip de cuvinte care exercită o atracție semantică mai ales asupra termenilor care le urmează în lanțul vorbirii sunt acele lexeme care ar putea fi numite cu o sintagmă *ad hoc* „depreciative universale” – ele comunică semnificația lor depreciativă cuvintelor care le urmează. Un exemplu ar putea fi termenii care desemnează prostituatele, datorită asocierii constante a prostituției cu impuritatea; o asemenea lărgire a sensului a avut loc în limbi precum poloneza sau ceha, și încă și mai mult în limbi ca franceza sau spaniola, unde astfel de cuvinte au devenit determinanți generici cu sens peiorativ.

« Allo, la B.A.P.S.? Envoyez-moi un homme qui m'aide à ouvrir ce putain de pot de confiture. » (textul unei caricaturi din *Le Nouvel Observateur*, nr. 3/1995)

„¡Es por tu puta incontinencia verbal!” (din filmul *El reino*, regia Rodrigo Sorogoyen)



„¿Juanito, donde está el puto perro?” (din filmul *Juanito y el perro*, regia Juan Manuel Cuenca)

**2.4.** Un alt exemplu în care această „atracție lingvistică” poate fi foarte bine pusă în relief sunt construcțiile cu valoare comparativă. Prin chiar natura lor aceste construcții pun în paralel două sau mai multe realități, având drept consecință o evaluare comparativă a lor. De aceea nu este de mirare dacă, de pildă, compararea cu o realitate având în orice caz o valoare foarte scăzută în sfera aprecierii umane este întotdeauna jignitoare pentru obiectul comparat:

„Șabelski (ieșind cu Lvov din casă): Doctorii sunt la fel ca avocații, cu o singură deosebire: avocații îi jefuiesc pe oameni, iar doctorii îi și omoară pe deasupra...” (Anton Pavlovici Cehov, *Ivanov*, actul I, scena 3)

„Pisicile pe acoperiș fac muzică mai bună.” (conform lui Serghei Prokofiev, o asemenea frază s-ar fi auzit în timpul premierei primului său concert pentru pian și orchestră (*apud* I. Nestiev, 1946, p. 84));

sau chiar atunci când comparația e relativ favorabilă:

„They drink and take drugs, you only drink. You are the best.” (Harlan Coben, *Stay Close*)

În schimb, compararea cu o realitate ce reprezintă excelența este favorabilă chiar și când pune în inferioritate entitatea comparată:

„A fost o onoare pentru Pompei de a fi fost cucerit de Cezar, iar pentru Marchand de a fi fost învins numai de Bach.” (Charles Burney, *Present State of Music in Germany*, 1775, *apud Scurtă cronică a Annei Magdalena Bach*, p. 57)

**2.5.** Verbele numite *sentiendi* sau *credendi* au tendința, în schimb, să deplaseze semnificația unui enunț spre evaluarea negativă:

„– Haide, dragă! Lasă-mă să mă uit! Unde mai vedem noi acolo meciuri din campionatul intern?

– Credeam că m-am măritat cu un intelectual.” (deci cei care se uită la meciuri de fotbal nu sunt intelectuali; din filmul *Ziua plecării*, de Svetoslav Djuranović)

„– Mamă! De ce-l pui totdeauna pe tata să dea el telefon?

– Lasă-l, dragă, să se simtă și el util.” (deci acum se simte inutil, sau chiar este; din filmul *Felicia înainte de toate*, regia Șerban Rădulescu și Melissa de Raaf)

**2.6.** Un alt fenomen care poate fi explicat prin această „atracție lingvistică” este jocul de cuvinte. În cazul acestuia, atracția dintre două lexeme prezente în același context este întărită de o asemănare sau identitate a semnificantului, indiferent dacă e vorba de o polisemie reală sau numai de o simplă omonimie:

„Mona Muscă riscă să fie zburată din PNL” (*Evenimentul zilei* din 17 septembrie 2006)

„Flutur zboară cu roiul peste PNL” (*Gândul* din 15 octombrie 2005)

„Câinilor le miroase a blat” (titlu *Realitatea TV*)

În aceste exemple constatăm ambiguitatea dintre un nume propriu și un nume comun omonim; în cazul al treilea este vorba despre omonimia dintre numele unui animal și un nume afectuos dat unei echipe de fotbal, echipa *Dinamo*.

**2.7.** Un alt exemplu care pune în lumină acest fenomen al „atracției lingvistice” îl reprezintă expresiile fixe sau idiomatice sau sinapsiile. Aceste expresii fixe reprezintă chiar un caz extrem al forței de atracție lingvistică – prin asociere constantă, ele au ajuns să formeze o suită fixă de cuvinte, care nu poate fi în general dislocată, dar pentru necesități stilistice această dislocare poate fi totuși produsă – iar efectul este cel mai adesea comic:

„Rică: Te iubesc precum iubește sclavul lumina și orbul libertatea.” (I. L. Caragiale, *O noapte furtunoasă*, actul II, scena 2)

„Bottom: I had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was... The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.” (W. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, actul IV, scena 1)

**2.8.** Cu această idee putem trece la un nivel superior de complexitate pentru a aborda cheștiunea a ceea ce am putea numi „figurile hibride”. Aici, două sau mai multe reprezentări (lingvistice sau de altă natură) se contopesc într-una singură, rezultând o figură care preia caracteristicile figurilor de origine, depășindu-le totodată (ar putea fi comparat acest procedeu cu condensarea freudiană prezentă în elaborarea visului sau cu semnificantul lacanian sub care alunecă un alt semnificat) Aici, ceea ce ține în viață o asemenea figură hibridă este tocmai forța de atracție lingvistică. Deja Jan Mukařovsky (1974) a remarcat în repetate rânduri că o caracteristică dintre cele mai importante ale poeziei moderne, în contrast cu cea tradițională, o reprezintă tocmai faptul că poezia modernă îl forțează practic pe receptor să

găsească o coerență acolo unde aceasta nu pare la prima vedere să existe. Același lucru se întâmplă și în cazul figurilor hibride, în care se pornește de la unul sau mai multe elemente de bază pe care se grefează o modificare adusă de locutor.

Pentru a face o listă foarte sumară a figurilor hibride, categorisite (în mod evident, nu exhaustiv) în funcție de punctul/punctele de plecare, putem deosebi:

a) figuri hibride pornind de la titluri cunoscute:

„Pamflete vesele și triste” (titlu de Mircea Dinescu, pornind de la volumul „Balade vesele și triste” al lui Topârceanu)

„Descriptio bolnaviae” (titlul unei rubrici din *Cațavencii*, pornind, evident, de la *Descriptio Moldaviae* a lui Cantemir)

„Frumoasa și Bastia” (titlu din *Evenimentul zilei*, 4 aprilie 2002, pornind de la „Frumoasa și bestia”, în care bestia este înlocuită de numele echipei franceze de fotbal Bastia)

„Ascensiunea lui Vadim Tudor nu mai poate fi oprită” (titlu din *Național*, 26 august 1998, pornind de la numele piesei lui B. Brecht, *Ascensiunea lui Arturo Ui poate fi oprită*)

„Proxenet la 18 ani” (titlu din *Evenimentul zilei*, 24 februarie 2002, pornind de la „Căpitan la 15 ani” de Jules Verne)

b) figuri hibride pornind de la citate celebre:

„Baronii galbeni au dovedit tuturor că iubesc trădarea, dar nu-i pot suferi pe trădători” (remarcă a Gabrielei Firea la B1 TV, 14 august 2020, pornind, evident, de la celebra replică a lui Farfuridi din *O scrisoare pierdută*)

c) figuri hibride vizuale: ne putem gândi în acest context la figurile compozite ale lui Arcimboldo, la picturile lui Salvador Dalí – care pornesc de la vechi maeștri precum Botticelli, Velázquez, Rubens, Meissonier și alții –, la seria de caricaturi ale lui Matty Aslan (de altfel, caricatura manifestă o predilecție față de figurile hibride), amalgamând diverse instrumente de măsurare a timpului (un ceas solar care face tic-tac, o clepsidră care sună ca un ceas deșteptător ș.a.m.d.). De asemenea, în barul tematic *The Soviet* din Cluj poate fi admirată o pictură murală reprezentând un Superman pe post de cârmaci, având scris dedesubt textul *Comrade Superman will lead us to victory*. Avem aici de-a face cu o fuziune mai complexă (și parodică) între codul propagandei comuniste și cel al filmelor americane cu Supermani). În

fine, un grafician care utilizează constant această hibridizare în opera lui este germanul Michael Lassel, care imaginează, de pildă, o orgă tradițională cu o consolă electronică pusă deasupra (propunând astfel un fel de fuziune a epocilor istorice).

**3.0.** Iată o introducere (foarte sumară) în ceea ce am putea numi „atrakția lingvistică universală”. Ea se bazează, în fond, pe ideea (simplă și intuitivă) că pentru a realiza un discurs în practica vorbirii, cuvintele, enunțurile și orice alte unități lingvistice de orice fel trebuie să se atragă între ele; cuvintele izolate nu ar putea produce niciodată efecte de sens – efectul de sens fiind asemenea forței care ia naștere în fizică din interacțiunea a două corpuri. Și poate fi vorba de o forță redutabilă. Este suficient pentru a ne da seama de acest lucru să cităm această scurtă anecdotă:

„Violonistul: Domnule Brahms, pentru numele lui Dumnezeu, cântați mai încet, vă rog, că nu m-aud deloc.

Brahms: Slavă Domnului!” (comunicată de tatăl autorului)

Vedem cum a doua replică alăturată primeia schimbă total sensul discuției. Dacă, după prima replică, violonistul părea cel care domină discuția, datorită exprimării unei dorințe legitime, replica lui Brahms inversează total pozițiile de putere – acum Brahms pare nu numai că-l domină, ci că l-a învins total pe celălalt.

**3.1.** De remarcat faptul că această „forță de atracție lingvistică” nu poate fi în niciun fel confundată cu alte încercări de a explica coerența textuală, una dintre cele mai cunoscute fiind propusă de A. J. Greimas (1966), care introducea termenul de „izotopie” referindu-se la faptul că două sau mai multe lexeme pot avea trăsături de sens în comun, din alăturarea lor rezultând tocmai izotopia textuală. Dar, după cum am văzut mai sus, forța de atracție lingvistică se poate referi la orice cuvinte, indiferent care este locul lor în lanțul vorbirii și câte trăsături semantice au în comun. Izotopia greimasiană nu este decât un caz particular al unei atracții mai largi.

Este semnificativ și faptul că elementele care intră în această interacțiune lingvistică pot să nu fie menționate explicit (exemple avem chiar în jocurile de cuvinte mai sus amintite, unde unul dintre termeni este de fiecare dată absent). În mod frecvent, însă, contextul extralingvistic mai larg furnizează elementul lipsă, deseori cu un grad destul de mare de certitudine:

„Dacă dispare ceva de aici, cine răspunde?” (Persoana care pune o astfel de întrebare arată că-l consideră pe interlocutorul său un hoț.)

„Ștefan Iordache (spunând replica din *Richard III* de W. Shakespeare): Un cal! Dau un regat pentru un cal!

Voce din sală: Da' un măgar nu-i bun?

Ștefan Iordache: Ba da! Pofțiți pe scenă!” (comunicată de T. M., profesor de limba română la liceul Ady-Șincai, Cluj)

**3.2.** În fond, nu este acesta mecanismul prin care funcționează vorbirea însăși? La urma urmei, diferența între un discurs bun și unul prost alcătuit constă în modul în care locutorul/locutorii a(u) știut să folosească „forțele de atracție lingvistică” pentru a-și realiza discursul propriu, propria transpunere a lui *langue* în *parole*. Vorbirea comună – sau mai puțin comună – este plină de exemple de discursuri ratate, în care forțele de atracție lingvistică au scăpat de sub control, efectul comic nefiind altceva decât „pedeapsa” pentru această lipsă de „abilitate lingvistică”:

„Confecționăm ghete din pielea clientului.” (comunicată de T. M., profesor de limba română la liceul Ady-Șincai, Cluj)

„Vindem cărucioare pentru copii din fier forjat.” (comunicată de F. S., studentă la Facultatea de Litere, UBB)

„Copiii care au practicat acest sport îl vor putea practica până la o vârstă înaintată.” (comunicată de profesorul Ștefan Cazimir de la Universitatea din București)

„Vă țin aicea în soare până la miezul nopții!” (replică atribuită unui cadru militar de la UM Lipova)

Dar și discursurile ratate, și cele reușite fac parte, în egală măsură, din acea *energeia*, acea deschidere care este, după Wilhelm von Humboldt (1835/2008), esența oricărei limbi vii.

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**Presă:**

- colecțiile publicațiilor:  
*Cațavencii*  
*Evenimentul zilei*  
*Gândul*  
*Național*.



#### ***IV. Contribuții studentești***





## **PREAMBUL:**

### **Elemente de cultură și civilizație în predarea limbilor străine**

Didactica modernă promovează introducerea de elemente de cultură și civilizație în predarea limbilor străine, proces care nu se poate reduce la simpla transmitere de elemente lingvistice deoarece implică și dobândirea unor abilități funcționale, pragmatice, socioculturale. Pe lângă competențele conceptuale (a ști), orele de limbi străine trebuie să transmită în aceeași măsură cunoștințe procedurale (a face), cunoștințe atitudinal-valorice (a fi) și cunoștințe strategice (a deveni). Elementele de cultură și civilizație joacă un rol esențial în dobândirea acestora, după cum spune expresia „Ești de atâtea ori om câte limbi știi”.

Data fiind importanța introducerii de elemente de cultură și civilizație în predarea limbilor străine, ne-am gândit să valorificăm munca studenților din cadrul cursurilor de Cultură și civilizație britanică și de Cultură și civilizație spaniolă și hispanoamericană într-un workshop dedicat studenților Universității „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca, desfășurat sub egida Conferinței Internaționale *Dinamica limbajelor de specialitate: Tehnici și strategii inovatoare*, ediția a X-a, organizată de Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate al Facultății de Litere (Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca). La nivelul universității există sesiuni de comunicări ale studenților care se desfășoară sub formă de competiție. Ceea ce ne face diferiți este faptul că le-am oferit studenților și posibilitatea de a-și publica lucrarea în volumul conferinței. Scopul acestui demers este dezvoltarea competențelor individuale ale studenților. Implicarea lor în activități extra-curriculare duce la motivarea, stimularea lor, prin urmare la dobândirea de noi cunoștințe, familiarizarea cu metodele specifice de cercetare, îmbunătățirea competențelor lingvistice, social-culturale și atitudinale.

Pentru workshopul dedicat culturii și civilizației spaniole și hispanoamericane, studentele înscrise au ales diferite subiecte, dintre cele mai interesante, care le-au determinat să cerceteze și să aprofundeze temele respective, sub îndrumarea lect. univ. dr. Sanda-Valeria Moraru și lect. univ. dr. Alina-Lucia Nemeș, titulare la Departamentul de Limbi și Literaturi

Romanice al Facultății de Litere din cadrul Universității „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca.

Anca-Ruxandra Colcer, studentă a Facultății de Litere (UBB), specializarea spaniolă-norvegiană, anul II, în lucrarea intitulată *El Dorado: la historia y las consecuencias de este tesoro*, coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Sanda-Valeria Moraru, ne prezintă importanța culturală și economică a legendei orașului de aur, *El Dorado*, datând din secolul al XVI-lea, abordată atât în literatura din Columbia, cât și în literatura universală.

În lucrarea *La inmigración juvenil de América Latina a Estados Unidos: causas y consecuencias*, coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Sanda-Valeria Moraru, Andreea-Nicoleta Pop, studentă a Facultății de Litere (UBB), specializarea spaniolă-coreeană, anul II, ne relatează câteva din traumele pe care le trăiesc copiii și adolescenții care își riscă viața pentru a scăpa de sărăcia din țările lor natale din America Latină pentru a emigra în Statele Unite. Interesant este cum se vede totul din perspectiva celor implicați, nu doar din punctul de vedere al presei care încearcă să ofere o imagine estompată asupra realității.

Personalitatea cameleonică a artistei mexicane Frida Kahlo a fost tratată în lucrarea *El imaginario artístico de Frida Kahlo. La alteridad como catarsis*, scrisă de Georgiana-Raluca Strugar, studentă a Facultății de Litere (UBB), specializarea spaniolă-română, anul I, coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Sanda-Valeria Moraru. Vedem cum pictorița a transpus în tablourile sale evenimentele tragice prin care a trecut, în încercarea sa de a se elibera și de a se reinventa prin creațiile sale, pline de simboluri, care deschid o multitudine de posibilități de interpretare.

Sonia Șandru, studentă a Facultății de Litere (UBB), specializarea spaniolă-engleză, anul II, a studiat schimbarea pe care a provocat-o lunga perioadă a dictaturii lui Francisco Franco (de la sfârșitul Războiului Civil din 1939 până la moartea dictatorului în 1975) în societatea spaniolă, cu precădere în rolul pe care îl joacă femeia în viața personală și socială, de la mamă și gospodină, la exercitarea unor funcții importante și implicarea în politică, temă expusă în lucrarea *La mujer en la España de la Guerra Civil*, coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Alina-Lucia Nemeș.

Miguel de Unamuno este cunoscut pentru noutatea adusă în literatura spaniolă la începutul secolului al XX-lea. Autorul a inventat un cuvânt nou “nivolas” pentru a defini un nou gen literar, un alt fel de roman, diferit de cel cu care erau obișnuți cititorii. Maria-Georgiana Vintilă, studentă a Facultății de Litere (UBB), specializarea spaniolă-franceză, anul II, în lucrarea *La dimensión existencial y el carácter metaficcional en la obra Niebla de Miguel de Unamuno*, coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Alina-Lucia Nemeș, abordează tema implicării autorului și a cititorilor în opera *Niebla*, în viața personajului

principal, ceea ce face ca opera să fie deschisă unor noi abordări, noi interpretări, cu fiecare nouă lectură, cititorii devenind și ei creatori.

Lucrările în limba engleză prezentate în cadrul conferinței DLS și incluse în această secțiune au ca punct de pornire cursul facultativ de *Cultură și civilizație anglofonă (British Culture and Civilization)* coordonat, în limba engleză, de lect. dr. Eugen-Radu Wohl, în cadrul Facultății de Istorie și Filosofie, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca. Acest curs, alături de alte opționale sau facultative similare, acceptate și incluse în planurile de învățământ ale facultăților arondate (de cultură și civilizație, comunicare academică, limbă străină pentru știință și tehnologie, limbă străină pentru turism, curs de tehnici de redactare creativă etc.), face parte din oferta educațională a Departamentului de Limbi Străine Specializate din cadrul Facultății de Litere, UBB Cluj-Napoca. Scopul acestora este să reprezinte platforme prin care studenții să poată beneficia de oportunitatea de a-și consolida cunoștințele de limbă străină (limba engleză, în cazul cursului aici menționat) și, implicit, strategiile de comunicare academică și interculturală.

Astfel, articolele studenților publicate în volumul de față își propun să ne ofere o radiografie a unei culturi vaste, cultura anglofonă, să-i testeze limitele și, implicit, să îi probeze relevanța în contemporaneitate. Prin tematicile interesante pentru care au optat și pe care le-au cercetat în profunzime, autorii articolelor de față reușesc, pe de-o parte, să ne prezinte imaginea culturii și civilizației britanice așa cum e percepută ea astăzi, iar pe de alta, să se înfățișeze pe sine ca cercetători veritabili, capabili de analize complexe, responsabili și atenți la judecățile de valoare pe care le emit.

Ordinea în care materialele au fost aranjate în volum respectă cronologia problematicilor abordate de autori.

Antonia Varga (studentă a Facultății de Istorie și Filosofie, specializarea Istorie) ne propune, în lucrarea *The Wars of the Roses: Steps Towards Modern Britain*, o analiză aprofundată asupra Războiului celor două roze (1455-1485), eveniment major care a contribuit fundamental la construcția și consolidarea Marii Britanii așa cum se prezintă acest stat astăzi. „Clar și concis”, în cuvintele autoarei, bazat pe o serioasă cercetare, articolul reușește să îmbine variatele abordări asupra acestui subiect îndelung studiat într-o perspectivă unitară.

Un alt punct nodal în procesul de modernizare al Marii Britanii a fost reprezentat de lunga domnie a reginei Victoria (1837-1901), epoca victoriană așadar, iar lucrarea Mihaelei Eugenia Păduraru (studentă a Facultății de Istorie și Filosofie, specializarea Istorie), intitulată *Behind The Curtains: A Look at Queen Victoria's Life and Reign*, ne invită la o incursiune în viața omului din spatele imaginii publice, reușind, cu o salutară atenție la detalii,

să recompună portretul intim al acestui important monarh, „the one and only Queen Victoria”, cum frumos o prezintă autoarea.

Lucrarea Alexandrei Luminița Preda (studentă a Facultății de Istorie și Filosofie, specializarea Istorie), intitulată *Is Freedom of the Press Possible? Case Study: A Focus on British Media*, oferă cititorilor, pe de-o parte, o riguroasă analiză istorică a presei britanice și a legilor pe care s-a fundamentat, iar pe de alta, urmărind raportul strâns între puterea politică și libertatea presei, scoate la lumină „bătăliile cu cenzura” pe care cuvântul scris a fost nevoit să le poarte încă de la începuturile sale. Concluziile autoarei, surprinzătoare poate, însă pertinent argumentate, sunt că „istoric vorbind, presa a putut fi cu adevărat liberă doar atunci când țara se confrunta cu tensiuni interne” și nu pe timp de pace, cum am fi îndreptățiți să credem.

Marian Toader (student al Facultății de Istorie, specializarea Studii de Securitate), autorul lucrării *The United Kingdom: A Geopolitical Approach*, ne aduce mai aproape de lumea de azi și ne detaliază acțiunile întreprinse de Marea Britanie „ca actor non-statal, înainte și după Brexit” din perspectivă geopolitică, plusurile și minusurile deciziei acestei țări de a părăsi Uniunea Europeană, precum și impactul pe termen scurt și lung asupra întregului glob. Atent la raporturile de putere dintre țările lumii, autorul reușește să ne prezinte modul în care ieșirea Marii Britanii din UE „poate crea un precedent” și poate influența configurația geopolitică pe continentul european și dincolo de el.

*The Commonwealth of Nations. A Brief Look at the Organization's Crisis Management Strategies*, lucrarea Ancuței Șcheul (studentă a Facultății de Istorie, specializarea Studii de Securitate), ne oferă o privire concentrată asupra Comunității Națiunilor, a rolului pe care Regatul Unit al Marii Britanii și Irlandei de Nord îl are în interiorul comunității, precum și asupra modului în care această organizație interguvernamentală reușește sau nu să fie alături de membrii săi, „la bine și la rău”. Autoarea aduce inspirat în discuție strategiile comunității în situații de criză, concentrându-și atenția pe trei momente de cumpănă din viața organizației și pe modul în care au fost gestionate: atacul terorist din Christchurch, Noua Zeelandă (2019), incendiile de vegetație din Australia (Decembrie 2019 – Februarie 2020), precum și pe „provocările anului 2020”, respectiv pe răspunsul Comunității Națiunilor la criza generată de pandemia de coronavirus.

Încheiem cu speranța că aceste contribuții vor stârni curiozitatea celorlalți studenți de a citi, de a cerceta și de a discuta alte teme de cultură și civilizație spaniolă, hispanoamericană și anglofonă.

*Alina-Lucia Nemeș, Eugen-Radu Wohl*

# El Dorado: la historia y las consecuencias de este tesoro

ANCA-RUXANDRA COLCER<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen.** Esta investigación persigue mostrar la importancia de la leyenda de *El Dorado* tanto para el pueblo colombiano, como para los españoles. En primer lugar, uno de los enfoques principales de este trabajo es el hecho de mostrar la historia real que se encuentra detrás de un mito tan famoso como es el de este tesoro. En segundo lugar, es vital demostrar la importancia y las consecuencias de *El Dorado*. El valor cultural de este mito se observa en el impacto que sigue teniendo en diferentes ámbitos como la literatura o la historia. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación se han utilizado diferentes artículos y libros especializados en este tema.

**Palabras clave:** *leyenda, ciudad de oro, ventajas culturales, exploradores, la Conquista.*

## Introducción

Este trabajo tiene como propósito resaltar la importancia del tesoro llamado *El Dorado* para el pueblo colombiano, mejor dicho el papel clave que tuvo este tesoro para el desarrollo cultural y económico del país. En el primer capítulo se va a presentar la leyenda del tesoro más importante y buscado de América Latina por los conquistadores españoles llamado *El Dorado*. En el segundo capítulo de este trabajo se van a evidenciar las consecuencias que tuvieron que afrontar las personas que decidieron emprender ese viaje para descubrir una de las anécdotas más importantes o la más importante del continente americano. En el tercer capítulo se van a exponer las ventajas que existieron gracias a la búsqueda de este tesoro tanto para el pueblo español, como para el pueblo colombiano. En el último capítulo se van a poder observar las razones que llevaron a que la leyenda de este tesoro sea contada en diferentes libros importantes tanto para la literatura colombiana, como para la literatura universal. La temática de este trabajo tiene como base libros y artículos muy importantes que van a estar mencionados tanto en el trabajo como en la bibliografía.

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## 1. La historia de esta leyenda

Este capítulo se propone clarificar la historia de la leyenda que existe detrás de *El Dorado*. En el primer subcapítulo se van a presentar algunos datos importantes sobre el tesoro y en el segundo subcapítulo se va a explicar el surgimiento de esta leyenda sobre la ciudad de oro.

**1.1.** La leyenda de la ciudad de oro llamada *El Dorado* existe desde el siglo XVI en Colombia cuando los conquistadores españoles se enteraron de una ceremonia que se realizaba en el norte y que consistía en que el rey se cubría todo el cuerpo con polvo de oro y realizaba ofrendas. En nuestros días se supone que “el pueblo donde se realizaba la ceremonia era la laguna de Guatavita, Colombia” (BBC News, 2013). La suposición de la existencia de este gran tesoro fue motivo de numerosas expediciones que se realizaron hasta el siglo XIX. Durante el avance del proceso la investigación del lugar se iba cambiando.

*El Dorado* representa realmente una ciudad legendaria que se supone que fue construida completamente de oro y que se ubica en una zona donde se pensaba que existían muchísimas minas de oro.

**1.2.** Esta leyenda se da a conocer en “1534 cuando Sebastián de Belalcázar junto con los conquistadores españoles que se encontraban en Quito, Ecuador” (BBC News, 2013) con el propósito de encontrar tesoros, se enteraron gracias a un indio sobre un lugar en el norte donde el rey acostumbraba a cubrirse el cuerpo con polvo de oro como ofrenda para los dioses. De este modo nació la famosa leyenda de *El Dorado* que gracias a otros rumores y mitos concluyó con la idea de que existe de una ciudad o un reino que está construido completamente de oro. En el momento en el que los españoles se enteraron de esta leyenda decidieron “denominar esa parte del país como la provincia de *El Dorado*” (BBC News, 2013).

En 1539 Belalcázar decidió ir a conquistar ese territorio lleno de riquezas para que luego pudiera regresar a España sin ningún impedimento.

Se supone que el origen de la leyenda se encuentra en la ceremonia del indio dorado que se llevaba a cabo en la laguna de Guatavita. Según las crónicas en las aguas de la laguna ocurrió una tragedia cuando Cacica fue acusada de infidelidad por Cacique. Se supone que Cacica con su amante vivían su amor en un templo que se encontraba al fondo de la laguna. Gracias a esta leyenda más tarde los jefes de tribus de aquella zona antes de llegar al poder tenían que cubrirse completamente en polvo de oro y arrojar objetos de oro y esmeraldas al agua como símbolo de ofrenda para los dioses. Pero esta

ceremonia ya no se llevaba a cabo cuando llegaron los conquistadores españoles a esa tierra.

## 2. Las consecuencias del tesoro

En el segundo capítulo se van a clarificar y presentar las consecuencias que el tesoro llamado *El Dorado* tuvo tanto para el pueblo colombiano, como para el pueblo español. En el primer subcapítulo se van a mencionar las consecuencias presentes para los conquistadores españoles y por lo tanto también para España y en el segundo subcapítulo se va a exponer el daño que representó esta leyenda para el pueblo colombiano.

**2.1.** Como se presentó en el capítulo anterior Sebastián de Belalcázar fue el primer conquistador español que decidió emprender un viaje para descubrir la ubicación exacta del tesoro. Sus planes eran encontrar ese tesoro y después regresar a España con todas las riquezas obtenidas. Las expediciones de Belalcázar no tuvieron éxito y peor aún, como castigo por su deslealtad Francisco Pizarro decidió nombrar a su hermano gobernador y capitán de una expedición que tenía el propósito de encontrar el tesoro. Aunque no habían encontrado nada decidieron seguir con la expedición hasta que sus provisiones lo permitían, pero con grandes pérdidas. “140 de los 220 españoles que habían partido en esa aventura habían muerto y también 3000 de los 4000 indios que los acompañaban” (Cervera, 2015). Por culpa de las dificultades y por perder muchos hombres la expedición se convirtió en una huida para conservar la vida.

Otro conquistador que decidió emprender una expedición para encontrar el tesoro fue Pedro de Ursúa. Él comenzó la misión con “Los cuatrocientos soldados que componían la misión de Ursúa habían sido reclutados en base a su valentía y experiencia en campañas anteriores, sin tener en cuenta su moral o su apego a la autoridad” (Cervera, 2015). Pero la expedición tuvo un giro inesperado y al final Ursúa fue asesinado por su propia gente. El mismo asesino de Ursúa emprendió una rebelión contra la Corona, pero al igual que él su gente lo mató.

Otro conquistador que decidió emprender el viaje y lograr descubrir el tesoro *El Dorado* fue Hernán Pérez de Quesada. Al inicio del viaje su equipo era formado por “300 españoles, 300 caballos, 800 cerdos y 1500 indios” (Cervera, 2015). Después de dos años su equipo era formado por “64 españoles, cuatro indios y 18 caballos” (Cervera, 2015). Este viaje fue uno de los más grandes desastres para la Corona y para la Conquista.

Otro conquistador español que decidió emprender este viaje fue Antonio de Berrio. Intentó encontrar el tesoro tres veces y cada una de las expediciones fue peor que la anterior.



**2.2.** *El Dorado* representó para los pueblos indígenas de esa región de Colombia una maldición por culpa de los maltratos que recibieron por parte de los conquistadores españoles. La búsqueda de este tesoro tan importante fue una parte clave para la Conquista. Los españoles al escuchar sobre la leyenda de un lugar que está construido completamente de oro decidieron ir por ello con la ayuda de las personas indígenas. Después de cada expedición que se realizaba el equipaje que regresaba vivo era muy pequeño, por lo tanto la maldición de *El Dorado* no les afectaba solamente a los conquistadores españoles, sino también a los indígenas que iban con ellos por obligación o persecución.

### **3. Las ventajas culturales que existen para los colombianos gracias a este tesoro**

En este capítulo se van a presentar las ventajas culturales que tuvieron los colombianos gracias al tan apreciado tesoro llamado *El Dorado*. En el primer subcapítulo se van a describir las ventajas que existieron gracias a esta ciudad de oro. En el segundo subcapítulo se van a exponer las ventajas indudables para el pueblo colombiano, especialmente las ventajas culturales existentes.

**3.1.** El mito de este tesoro tan importante ha llevado al descubrimiento de una cultura completamente diferente para los conquistadores españoles, respectivamente a la cultura de las tribus indígenas que vivían en Colombia. Para la cultura española la Conquista representó una época llena de aprendizaje y de conocimientos. Los conquistadores y exploradores de España obtuvieron además de ganancias económicas unos conocimientos culturales que llevaron después a España. En la búsqueda de este tesoro los españoles pudieron observar también los rituales y las tradiciones de las tribus que vivían en esa parte de Colombia. Una “parte de esas costumbres fueron llevadas y respetadas en España” (Elheraldo.co, 2013).

**3.2.** *El Dorado* representa para el pueblo colombiano una fuente de conocimientos sobre sus ancestros, mejor dicho sobre sus valores, costumbres, mentalidad y tradiciones. Este tesoro tiene un lugar fundamental en la cultura colombiana precisamente por su importancia y magnitud. El pueblo colombiano aún conserva “esta leyenda como un pilar fundamental en la historia del país” (Elheraldo.co, 2013) mostrando de este modo el respeto que aún existe para las tribus que poblaron esa zona. En la zona donde se

supone que existió la ciudad dorada se siguen conservando las tradiciones de las tribus que vivían allí.

#### 4. *El Dorado* en la literatura

En este capítulo se va a presentar la importancia de esta leyenda para la literatura tanto en Colombia, como también para la literatura universal.

Uno de los autores más destacados por usar como tema en sus obras literarias esta leyenda es el colombiano William Ospina. En la última novela llamada *La serpiente sin ojos* que cierra la trilogía Ospina narra con lujo de detalles tanto la leyenda del famoso tesoro, como ese suceso de la búsqueda de esta ciudad por los conquistadores españoles en diferentes expediciones. En toda la novela los episodios narrados demuestran su veracidad gracias a diferentes historiadores y documentos que datan de esas fechas. El libro ha sido muy apreciado en todo el país, igual que en el mundo entero gracias al modo verídico de presentar los hechos.

Otro autor en lengua española muy interesado en *El Dorado* es César Mallorquí que en su libro *La cruz de El Dorado* narra la aventura de tres jóvenes que van a buscar uno de los tesoros más importantes. Inician esta aventura tres jóvenes de diferentes nacionalidades: “un español, una colombiana y un árabe” (Manrique Sabogal, 2013). Este libro fue muy apreciado tanto por los leyentes, como por los críticos literarios por el espíritu de aventura presentado, pero también por evidenciar la historia y las aventuras por las que tuvieron que pasar los exploradores en búsqueda de este mito.

Otro libro que presenta la realidad sobre el inicio de la leyenda es *La leyenda de El Dorado y otros mitos del descubrimiento de América* de Christian Kupchik. El tema principal del libro es el proceso de la Conquista, pero con un enfoque especial en la leyenda del tesoro *El Dorado* y que representó él realmente para los exploradores españoles, pero también para las tribus que vivían allí.

*El Dorado* representó y sigue representando un pilón para la literatura colombiana y para la literatura universal precisamente por su misterio y por la curiosidad que sigue representando.

#### Conclusión

Después de realizar este trabajo sobre *El Dorado* se puede observar la gran importancia que tuvo este tesoro en el desarrollo cultural y económico de los dos países, respectivamente de España y de Colombia.

Tras la presentación realizada en el primer capítulo sobre la historia de este importante tesoro, en el segundo capítulo se puede observar una objetiva exposición de las consecuencias que tuvieron que enfrentar los

conquistadores que fueron detrás de ella. Otro aspecto profundamente analizado fue el demostrar que la leyenda tuvo numerosas ventajas culturales tanto para el pueblo español, como para los colombianos. El último capítulo se centró en la presentación de la importancia que sigue teniendo *El Dorado* en diferentes ámbitos, como la literatura siendo de este modo un tema usado por los escritores colombianos y también muy apreciado por los críticos literarios.

El trabajo que realicé condujo a la conclusión de que *El Dorado* sigue representando una gran parte de la historia de los colombianos precisamente por las diversas anécdotas que siguen estando vinculadas con él. El trabajo se propone evidenciar y presentar la historia que rodea esta leyenda, pero también sus consecuencias y sus ventajas que siguen presentes hasta hoy en día en diferentes ámbitos culturales.

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# La inmigración juvenil de América Latina a Estados Unidos: causas y consecuencias

ANDREEA-NICOLETA POP<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen:** Este artículo expone las principales causas socio-económicas y políticas de la migración de niños, niñas y adolescentes menores de 18 años desde Centroamérica y México, particularmente, a Estados Unidos, los peligros a los que se exponen en el trayecto y las consecuencias que el proceso de migración tiene para los NNA, tanto en plan afectivo, como en plan legal, definiendo su estatuto migratorio. También se analizan las medidas tomadas tanto por los países de origen, como por los Estados Unidos en cuanto al número creciente de NNA que viajan no acompañados e indocumentados hacia la frontera. Una de las contribuciones de este artículo es de proporcionar una síntesis de la información existente con respecto al problema de las migraciones juveniles desde América Latina hacia los Estados Unidos.

**Palabras clave:** *inmigración; niños, niñas y adolescentes no acompañados; causas de la migración juvenil; consecuencias de la migración juvenil; América Latina; los Estados Unidos.*

## Introducción

El solapamiento de las historias de todos los niños, niñas y adolescentes (NNA) que cruzan solos múltiples fronteras y pasan por innumerables peligros para llegar a Estados Unidos representa una “larga cicatriz continental” (Luiselli, 2019, p. 44) que se ha estado haciendo más y más presente en los últimos años. Esta metáfora retrata la realidad oscura que hasta muy recientemente ha pasado inadvertida por los medios de comunicación y el público general, pero que ulteriormente ha sido revelada por la denominada “Crisis Migratoria Estadounidense 2014”. Los peligros a los que se someten los NNA al empezar este trayecto suman “enfermedades, condiciones insalubres, hambre, violencia psicológica, abusos de poder, accidentes en el camino, hasta posibles violaciones, torturas, abusos físicos, secuestros, la posibilidad de caer en redes de trata, comercio sexual y esclavitud infantil, e incluso la muerte” (Álvarez Velasco et. Glockner

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Fagetti, 2018, p. 52). Aun así, el año pasado Estados Unidos se confrontó con una nueva crisis migratoria mayor que la del año 2014, con el Border Patrol registrando 76.136 detenciones de NNA, principalmente de Centroamérica y México. Teniendo todo esto en cuenta, ¿por qué deciden los menores iniciar este arduo trayecto y cuáles son las posibles consecuencias? Precisamente a estas preguntas trata de responder este artículo en los subcapítulos siguientes, centrándose en los principales países donde emigran los NNA.

## **Causas de la migración de NNA**

Las principales causas del éxodo de NNA centroamericanos y mexicanos son: motivos económicos, reunificación familiar, estudios y violencia social, con diversos grados de influencia conforme al país de salida y sus características sociales y económicas (Lorenzen, 2017, p. 200).

Honduras, El Salvador y Guatemala encabezan la lista con mayores índices de criminalidad de América Central. Estos datos resultaron como consecuencia de las guerras civiles que tuvieron lugar en estos países a finales del siglo XX y que dieron el inicio a un ciclo vicioso de uso de violencia para protestar, a la cual el Gobierno responde con más violencias para poder imponer sus reformas neoliberales y mantener el “orden democrático”. La inestabilidad social, la pobreza, la desigualdad y la exclusión han hecho que más y más gente recurriera a la violencia criminal bajo la forma de grupos criminales de jóvenes, mafias y carteles de drogas (Magaly Sanchez, 2006, p. 179). De esta forma, paulatinamente han empezado a haber más puestos de trabajo en el sector informal de la economía que en el formal, de modo que entre 1990 y 1997 siete de diez puestos de trabajo eran en el sector informal y, hasta el año 2000, estos representaban el 59% del total. (Magaly Sanchez, 2006, p. 182). En este contexto socio-económico y político, la única manera de escapar de la pobreza y la violencia es emigrar. Por eso, muchísimos padres deciden migrar a Estados Unidos de forma legal o indocumentada, con intención de poder sostener financieramente a sus familias y ulteriormente contratar los servicios de un coyote para que las trajera a Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, a veces los NNA se ven obligados a iniciar el trayecto hacia Estados Unidos de forma imprevista, por causa de amenazas por parte de los grupos criminales como la MS-13 o la 18 que los amenazan con la muerte para que acepten ser reclutados, en el caso de los chicos, o por temor de ser violadas o impulsadas hacia la prostitución por los mismos grupos, en el caso de las chicas.

Un ejemplo ilustrativo en este sentido es el presentado en el ensayo de Valeria Luiselli (2019, p. 70) que trata del recorrido del adolescente Manu,

que se ve obligado a huir tras haber sido testigo a la muerte de su amigo por culpa de la MS-18, los adversarios de la MS-13 que intentaba reclutarlos. Respecto al Gobierno y su implicación para disminuir el problema de las migraciones masivas, Manu responde lo siguiente: “¿Con el gobierno? Ponle ahí en tu libreta que no hacen nada por nadie como yo, que ese es el problema” (Luiselli, 2019, p. 70), sugiriendo que la falta de medidas sociales en contra de la pobreza y la violencia representa una causa principal del éxodo de tantos NNA.

La falta de recursos económicos es la que impulsa a los padres a emigrar, pero la reunión con sus hijos e hijas resulta difícil de realizar a menos que decidan traerlos por un camino muy peligroso con la ayuda de un coyote y pagar sumas gigantes para hacerlo. Sin embargo, no existe otra alternativa, dado que las normas impuestas después del 11 de septiembre de 2002 han hecho mucho más difícil la entrada en el país para los inmigrantes de América Latina. Actualmente, la Administración del presidente Donald J. Trump ha impuesto aún más normas en contra de la inmigración de todo tipo, separando familias y violando los derechos de los NNA inmigrantes (Pereira Peña, 2019, pp. 4-5).

El caso de México difiere un poco del de los otros países analizados, ya que el motivo principal para emigrar no es necesariamente la violencia, aunque sí que existe en combinación con otros motivos, sino la pobreza y la necesidad de sobrevivir, hecho que se puede ver en el trabajo de Matthew James Lorenzen (2017, p. 200). Tal como remarca Gloria Anzaldúa (2013, p. 51) la devaluación del peso y la creciente dependencia de la economía de México de Estados Unidos han hecho que haya pocos puestos de trabajo restantes en México, por lo que la gente decide emigrar para poder ganarse la vida. También relacionada con la necesidad de escapar de la pobreza es la emigración para acceder a la educación porque esta permite la movilidad social.

### **Consecuencias de la migración de NNA**

Como ya se ha mencionado anteriormente, los NNA pasan por grandes peligros para completar su recorrido hacia Estados Unidos, lo que puede tener graves consecuencias para su salud mental y emocional. Siendo testigos de sucesos abominables y viéndose obligados a cruzar desiertos, ríos, a embarcarse a bordo de “La Bestia”, el tren de mercancías que recorre México hasta llegar a la frontera con Estados Unidos y que es infame por lo peligroso que es viajar en él al ser un blanco de las bandas criminales como los Zetas (Luiselli, 2019, p. 24), los NNA se ven desprovistos de su niñez

(Luiselli, 2019, p. 63), obligados a madurar ya desde muy temprana edad. No obstante, después de pasar por todos estos eventos traumáticos, aún existe una gran posibilidad de ser deportados dado que entran de forma ilegal en Estados Unidos, obligados de esta forma a empezar desde cero.

Entrar en Estados Unidos representa en sí una nueva ola de estrés e interrogatorios para los NNA, a menudo maltratos por parte de Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), en manos de los cuales pasan al ser aprehendidos en la frontera estadounidense, mantenidos en condiciones inhumanas, no adecuadas para menores de edad, separados de sus familias y aterrados (Álvarez Velasco & Glockner Fagetti, 2018, p. 57). Lo que sigue es un largo proceso de intentar obtener un estatuto de residencia legal, muy bien ilustrado por Valeria Luiselli en su libro *Los niños perdidos: Un ensayo en cuarenta preguntas* (2019), lo que implica tener que proporcionar pruebas de maltratos, trabajo forzoso, abandono por parte de los padres, persecución etc. Desgraciadamente, eso significa que lo más trágica que es la historia de un menor, más oportunidades tiene de obtener asilo.

Quizá la parte más difícil es encontrar un abogado que acepte tomar su caso pro bono, ya que la mayoría de estos NNA no tiene los recursos necesarios para pagar por sus servicios y que, desde 2014, el tiempo que estos tienen a disposición para hacerlo disminuyó de 365 días a solo 21 días (Luiselli, 2019, p. 60). Además, las organizaciones que se ocupan de ayudarlos son muy pocas. Otro factor que influye en este proceso es que los niños no están informados con respecto a sus derechos como migrantes ya que en los centros de detención no se les presenta las opciones que tienen y hasta hay funcionarios que los desalientan a prestar solicitudes de asilo (Varela Huerta, 2015, p. 27).

Es más, el gobierno del país de salida y el del destino, en este caso Estados Unidos, se centran más bien en impedir que los inmigrantes lleguen a su destino o que no obtengan una resolución positiva, siendo vistos como una amenaza por una gran parte de la sociedad estadounidense, influenciada por los discursos políticos xenofóbicos. Como consecuencia de la crisis migratoria de 2014, se estableció un acuerdo entre México y Estados Unidos que dio luz al programa mexicano Frontera Sur cuyo propósito oficial era proteger los derechos de los inmigrantes, pero a través del cual han sido deportados más inmigrantes indocumentados que en Estados Unidos, convirtiendo México en un estado-tampón para inmigrantes (Cortés, 2018, p. 45). Por consiguiente, se puede concluir que el interés de los gobiernos no es resolver el núcleo del problema, sino pasar la culpa a otros. Mientras traten los síntomas del problema, pero no el problema en sí, este nunca se resolverá

por completo y los inmigrantes, víctimas invisibles de la indiferencia y los intereses de los que conducen el país, seguirán sufriendo.

Retomando el caso de Manu, desarrollado en el ensayo de Valeria Luiselli, se puede ver cómo, aun teniendo la residencia permanente casi garantizada gracias a unos abogados que tomaron su caso pro bono, la integración en la sociedad estadounidense se vuelve una pesadilla. Aunque los NNA tienen derecho a una educación gratuita, hay muchas escuelas que se niegan a admitir inmigrantes por culpa de no tener el nivel de inglés requerido o por no tener documentos, lo que es una práctica ilegal. Además, hasta en Estados Unidos existen miembros de las pandillas de las que los NNA huyeron de sus países de origen, como es el caso de Manu en su nueva escuela de Hempstead High Long Island donde se encuentra con miembros de la MS-13 y la 18. Su parecer con respecto a la criminalidad que reina en ambos países es que: “Hempstead es un hoyo de mierda lleno de pandilleros, igual que Tegucigalpa.” (Luiselli, 2019, p. 74). Esta remarca demuestra que la violencia de pandillas no reside solo en Latino América, como se tiende a sugerir en Estados Unidos a través de los medios de comunicación. La realidad es que también este país de todas las oportunidades contribuye actualmente al empeoramiento de la situación a través del consumo de drogas y el tráfico de armas, y en el pasado, durante la Crisis Latinoamericana de 1970, lo hizo al sostener los gobiernos que perpetraron actos de violencia profunda en contra de su pueblo (Cortés, 2018, p. 42).

## Conclusiones

El número desmesurado de NNA que cruzan cada año indocumentados y no acompañados la frontera del sur de Estados Unidos a pesar de las posibles repercusiones y las normas cada vez más rígidas impuestas, demuestra que las razones para emigrar son mucho más fuertes que cualquier otra cosa. Sin importar si se trata de razones económicas, de estudios, la reunión familiar o la violencia social, al fin y al cabo, todo se resume al interés superior del niño, a sus derechos fundamentales que, desgraciadamente, no se respetan por los estados implicados. Esto, combinado con el largo y extenuante proceso legal para obtener la residencia permanente, las discriminaciones, la xenofobia y la violencia que los persiguen en el nuevo país, tiene un efecto perturbador para la salud mental y emocional de los NNA. Por lo tanto, consideramos que futuras investigaciones se podrían centrar en los efectos a largo plazo de la inmigración de los NNA, siguiendo su capacidad de integración en la nueva sociedad y los obstáculos que encuentran en su camino.



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# La mujer en la España de la Guerra Civil

SONIA ȘANDRU<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen.** El siguiente artículo comienza con una introducción sobre la Guerra Civil en España, para poder después entender los efectos que tuvo sobre la mujer del país. Empezando con la Guerra Civil se observan mejor los cambios por los cuales pasa la sociedad española, especialmente la mujer. Al mismo tiempo este artículo hace una comparación entre el antes, durante y el después de la Guerra Civil, en relación con la vida de las mujeres en la España del siglo XX. Continuamos con el relato de los eventos que hacen posible el sufragio femenino, las primeras mujeres políticas de España y por supuesto la diferencia entre las mujeres republicanas y las franquistas. La última parte del artículo presenta las consecuencias de la guerra para la parte femenina de la población y algunas de las mujeres que desempeñan un papel esencial en la lucha por la igualdad de género en todos los ámbitos del político, al educacional, hasta al profesional.

**Palabras clave:** *Guerra Civil española, Segunda República, dictadura, educación, sufragio femenino, igualdad de género.*

## Introducción

En la España del siglo XX, el estatuto político y social de la mujer sufre varios cambios. Al principio de los años '30, gracias a la influencia de figuras femeninas que se hicieron oídas entre las miles de voces masculinas, la lucha liderada por académicas de diferentes clases sociales y por supuesto, activistas de la época, el Gobierno aprueba el voto femenino. El acceso a la educación es cada vez más fácil para ellas. Durante la Guerra Civil de España, que empieza en 1936 y acaba después de aproximadamente tres años con la derrota de los republicanos, el papel de las mujeres cambia en función del bando al cual pertenecen.

El lado republicano admite el reclutamiento de mujeres en el ejército y son conocidas como “milicianas”. Más tarde conocidas como “la nueva mujer”, son las protagonistas de la transformación de la visión pública sobre la feminidad y el papel fundamental de la mujer en la sociedad. Durante la Guerra Civil, las mujeres de la Segunda República llegan a poder reinventarse

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como seres sociales e incluso el gobierno las acepta como parte integrante del ejército aunque no siempre emprendan las posiciones de soldados luchando en el frente, es así como logran que sea reconocido el hecho de que son igual de capacitadas, aunque biológicamente no iguales a los hombres. Logran ser aceptadas como iguales a los varones, dando un paso más hacia adelante en la lucha por la igualdad de derechos entre mujeres y hombres, se liberan de gran parte del dominio clerical y de la ideología tradicionalista relacionada con el deber de una mujer.

Por otro lado, el bando sublevado mantiene una visión tradicionalista. De esta parte de la Guerra Civil, las mujeres no son admitidas al ejército, se quedan como amas de casa, rezando y cuidando de la casa y sus hijos. A diferencia de las milicianas, las franquistas no aparecen muy a menudo en representaciones artísticas, como por ejemplo, fotografías, ellas aparecen brevemente en cuadernos propagandistas y en algunas postales. El papel de la mujer de los nacionales no cambia mucho en comparación con el que tenían antes de la guerra, ellas no mueren en el frente o la retaguardia, o por ser torturadas por los soldados del bando opuesto, sin embargo ellas lloran por las heridas y las pérdidas de los hombres que defienden la causa nacional.

Obviamente la mujer de aquellos tiempos no puede ser descrita como es debido sin antes hablar de la Guerra Civil de España, el contexto, la situación social y política de la que surgió.

### ***Circunstancia política***

En 1923, con el apoyo del Rey Alfonso XIII, Miguel Primo de Rivera instaura una dictadura militar que dura 7 años, acabando en 1930, año en el cual el Rey Alfonso XIII dimite, ya que la dictadura apoyada por él llega a su fin.

La dictadura de Miguel Primo de Rivera conlleva a un retraso, tanto social, como económico de toda España, en comparación con otros países de su entorno. Precisamente este es uno de los motivos por los cuales la población del país gira hacia otros partidos y variadas ideologías políticas.

Tras las elecciones municipales de 1931, hay una mayoría de votos a favor de los republicanos, como resultado los concejales republicanos obtienen las grandes ciudades. Así, en este año los concejales monárquicos pierden gran parte de los votos y llegan a ser la minoridad.

Empiezan a surgir manifestaciones pro-republicanas, lo que hace que el Rey Alfonso XIII huya del país. El rey dimite y el comité revolucionario proclama la República, mejor conocida en la historia como la *Segunda República*. Niceto Alcalá Zamora es nombrado Presidente del Gobierno Provisional.

La Segunda República tiene previsto elaborar una nueva Constitución Republicana, pero con una visión fuertemente anticlerical. Al ser católico, Niceto Alcalá Zamora propone una secularización más moderada, dicha proposición no tiene mucho éxito entre la población y así se destaca un movimiento anticlerical. El movimiento anticlerical tiene raíces en Madrid y poco a poco arrasa todo el país, tomando forma de revueltas, en las que numerosos conventos y edificios religiosos son quemados, los cementerios y los lugares de culto son profanados, con graves consecuencias como heridos, incluso muertos.

Se nombra un nuevo presidente, Manuel Azaña, y la nueva constitución se aprueba en diciembre, iniciándose ya las primeras reformas.

Sin embargo, la Guerra Civil Española comienza bajo el mando de otro presidente, por su nombre: Alejandro Lerroux. Probablemente un factor importante para el comienzo de la Guerra Civil fue el hecho de que, durante el mandato de Alejandro Lerroux, España conoce una etapa de gran inestabilidad. En cuanto a la Revolución de 1934, Indalecio Prieto en un discurso sobre la revolución dice:

Sentimos también España muy dentro del alma, tan dentro como pueda gravitar dentro del alma de sus señorías, que aunque internacionalistas, aunque aspiramos que lazos de fraternidad unan a todos los hombres, no es egoísmo execrable el amor preferente a la tierra donde se ha nacido (*Vida Nueva*, 1934),  
nuestro deber, repito, es la revolución, con todos los sacrificios (*Vida Nueva*, 1934).

### ***Comienzo de la Guerra Civil***

El Casus belli de la guerra es el parcial fracaso del golpe de estado de julio de 1936 y tiene su comienzo el 17 de julio de 1936, cuando el ejército de África se subleva al gobierno del Frente Popular y se une a las tropas al mando del general Francisco Franco. Al día siguiente, es decir el 18 de julio de 1936, varias otras guarniciones se suman a la sublevación y así el general Franco es despertado a las 4 de la mañana para ser informado que se habían sublevado con éxito las guarniciones de Ceuta, Melilla y Tetuán, la capital del Protectorado español de Marruecos, en aquel entonces.

En el momento en que Francisco Franco recibe las noticias, él está en Las Palmas, junto con su esposa y su hija. Esa misma mañana, el general embarca a la esposa y a la hija en un transatlántico, rumbo a Francia, poco antes de subirse al “Dragón Rapide”, un avión que le lleva al Protectorado de Marruecos.

La batalla llega a ser librada en varios frentes, no solo políticos, luchas entre ideologías: fascismo y comunismo, dictadura militar y democracia republicana, pero también entre clases sociales y guerras de religión.

Hay dos partes del conflicto, conocidas como: bando republicano y bando sublevado.

El bando republicano se constituye en torno al Gobierno formado por el Frente Popular, el cual es compuesto por una coalición de partidos. El bando republicano es apoyado por el movimiento obrero y los sindicatos UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) y CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo).

El bando sublevado escoge por sí mismo el nombre de “bando nacional” y se constituye en torno a gran parte del alto mando militar, institucionalizado en una primera fase en la Junta de Defensa Nacional, previo al nombramiento del general Francisco Franco como Generalísimo y Jefe de Gobierno del Estado.

Ambos lados cometen graves crímenes tanto en el frente como en la retaguardia y se acusan mutuamente de la comisión de actos de genocidio, fratricidio, sentencias a muerte, hasta de intentos de aniquilación completa de la oposición y resistencia, encontrada durante la guerra. Algunas de estas acusaciones son debatidas públicamente e incluso se llega a cierta justicia mediante juicios organizados acabada la guerra.

### ***Fin de la Guerra Civil***

Ambos lados de la Guerra Civil obtienen la ayuda de varios países, aunque unos más que otros. Este es uno de los motivos por los cuales la República pierde la guerra.

A principios de la guerra Inglaterra y Francia promueven un acuerdo de no-intervención al cual muchos países se suman.

Los Estados Unidos, bajo la administración del presidente Roosevelt, hacen esta decisión oficial. En 1937 intenta él mismo proporcionar ayuda a la República, en aquel año es de todas formas demasiado tarde, porque el bando sublevado controla ya la mayoría de los territorios del país.

Además del intento fallido de los Estados Unidos en 1937, varios otros países aportan ayuda a los franquistas y republicanos. Dichos países están divididos en dos partes: los nazistas y fascistas por un lado y los comunistas por el otro.

Ninguno de los países democráticos apoya a la Segunda República pero sí uno de los comunistas, es decir la URSS. La URSS facilita material bélico y reservas alimentarias al bando republicano a cambio del oro del Banco de España, el cual ulteriormente se transforma en el famoso “Oro de

Moscú”, cobrado por Stalin. Gracias al apoyo de Stalin se forman las así llamadas milicias. El Partido Comunista Español empieza a crecer bastante pero al ser anticlerical el bando republicano pierde, obviamente, el apoyo de la iglesia que llega a unirse al bando del general Franco. De comienzo a fin, la República, que tiene la mayor probabilidad de ganar la Guerra Civil al inicio en 1931, pierde más y más aliados, junto con la financiación necesaria para llevar a cabo la guerra y no solo eso pero tampoco recibe de los comunistas suficientes tropas y material bélico. Cuentan también con el apoyo de las Brigadas Internacionales pero ellas son formadas por voluntarios y aunque son valientes y alrededor de 40000 en número siguen siendo simplemente voluntarios, sin experiencia o disciplina.

Durante la Guerra Civil ambos bandos utilizan varios mensajes de propaganda, hasta incluso se contestan los unos a los otros a través de carteles. De todas formas uno de los mensajes de propaganda más famosos del Partido Comunista Español durante la Guerra Civil es:

“11 Febrero 1873: Un Anheló

14 Abril 1931: Una Esperanza

16 Febrero 1936: Una Victoria” (Cabañas Bravo M., Cartel, 1938)



**Fig. 1.** Mensaje de propaganda del Partido Comunista Español durante la Guerra Civil (Cabañas Bravo M., Cartel, 1938)

Por otro lado, los nacionales reciben puede que el doble o más de lo que reciben los republicanos en materia de armas y personal militar. Los nazistas y los fascistas facilitan tanques y aviones, junto con una infantería militar italiana, a lo que se añade el combustible de los Estados Unidos e Inglaterra. Por supuesto los franquistas cuentan con la ayuda del experimentado ejército de África, es decir el bando sublevado tiene un ejército formado por militares profesionales, lo que a los republicanos les falta.

En los años segundo y tercero de la guerra: 1937 y 1938, los nacionales van ganando más y más territorios, así la oposición es obligada a trasladar la sede del gobierno varias veces y la estabilizan finalmente en Barcelona.

El bombardeo de Guernica, por pilotos nazi, atrae la atención del famoso Pablo Picasso. El pintor intenta direccionar la simpatía de la gente a la causa republicana mediante la exposición de un cuadro de Guernica tras el bombardeo, con el fin de inclinar la libra hacia el bando republicano.

En 1937, Largo Caballero, conocido como el “Lenin Español”, dimite de la posición de Presidente del Gobierno de la Segunda República. Es nombrado Presidente Manuel Azaña y así empieza la República a dividirse entre anarquistas, quienes desean la revolución por encima de la guerra, y los comunistas, quienes desean ante todo el triunfo militar.

En febrero de 1938, los ejércitos del general Franco lanzan una ofensiva en Aragón arrasando como una ola las tropas republicanas de la zona.

La República se hunde, finalmente, a causa de las divisiones políticas internas y son derrotados en la “Batalla del Ebro”, la cual pasa en la historia como una de las batallas más sangrientas de toda la Guerra Civil española. Poco después cae Cataluña.

El 27 de Febrero de 1939 el Gobierno de Francisco Franco es reconocido por Inglaterra y Francia, como consecuencia Manuel Azaña dimite.

El 28 de Marzo de 1939 es ocupada la capital, Madrid.

El 1 de Abril de 1939 Francisco Franco firma el último parte de guerra y comienza su dictadura de 36 años, finalizando en 1975.

Así acaba el conflicto bélico más sangriento de toda la Europa Occidental del fin de la Primera Guerra mundial hasta ese día. Durante la Guerra Civil de España el territorio del país se convierte en una zona experimental de tácticas de guerra y nuevas armas para los grandes poderes de Europa.

Se supone que hay alrededor de 500.000 muertos y casi tantos refugiados, la mayoría en Francia. De los muertos durante la guerra

aproximadamente 7.000 son monjes, frailes y monjas. Las casualidades de la guerra no se resumen solo a los que fallecieron durante el combate, mediante la tortura o las ejecuciones ilegales, a esto se añaden también las mujeres republicanas que escogieron tomarse la vida antes que llegar a manos de los nacionalistas los cuales o las violaban o las humillaban públicamente afeitándoles las cabezas.

## **El estatuto de la mujer en la España de la Guerra Civil**

### ***Las milicianas contra las franquistas***

Aunque hoy en día las mujeres republicanas de la Guerra Civil son vistas y apreciadas como íconos de mujeres modernas, la realidad durante la guerra es otra. Es verdad que fueron parte integrante y activa del ejército, pero no siempre fue tal y como se lo esperaban.

Las mujeres del bando republicano se unen a las milicias y son activas durante la guerra al principio, pero poco a poco son trasladadas del frente a la cocina u otras partes donde “correrían menos riesgo”, lugares que son más apropiados para una mujer.

Es verdad que obtienen cierta libertad y pueden luchar en la guerra pero llegan a ser utilizadas como presión e incentivo para los hombres.

Las diferencias entre las mujeres de los dos lados de la Guerra Civil son obvios e incluso opuestos, de un lado mueren en el frente y de otro lamentan la pérdida de sus parientes varones. Mientras que las mujeres republicanas, como hemos mencionado anteriormente, participan activamente en la guerra como milicianas, las mujeres del bando sublevado son mantenidas como amas de casa, son conmovidas hacia la oración y el cuidado de los hijos. Incluso la representación artística de las mujeres es totalmente diferente. Donde las milicianas aparecen en fotografías, carteles y grabados, las mujeres franquistas son escasamente representadas salvo en postales y cuadernos propagandistas.

Estas dos representaciones de la feminidad no hacen más que acentuar la división entre el empoderamiento, la libertad y los derechos de la mujer y el tradicionalismo, cosa que no trae consigo el soporte necesitado para la lucha a favor de la igualdad de derechos entre hombres y mujeres, por la cual lucharon muchas otras antes que ellas, algunas hasta contemporáneas como Clara Campoamor. De hecho, tanto Clara Campoamor, como Victoria Kent son bastante conocidas durante la Guerra Civil.

La Guerra Civil, afortunadamente, no es solo un período de división y de sufrimiento sino también uno en el que las organizaciones femeninas conocen una gran expansión y por primera vez consiguen politizarlas. Las mujeres de la Guerra Civil, en especial las milicianas reciben el título de



“nueva mujer”, lo que les permite redefinirse. La imagen femenina cambia constantemente durante la guerra y se consagra en un nuevo tipo de maternidad, es decir la “maternidad social”, lo que demuestra que aún con los avances y éxitos de las mujeres tanto en el ámbito social como en el político, un rasgo del tradicionalismo persiste en todo movimiento de la lucha liderada por las mujeres.

### ***La mujer antes de la Guerra Civil española***

Durante la Segunda República, las mujeres obtienen gran parte de los “derechos comunes”, tan anhelados. Por supuesto, todo esto gracias, en gran parte, a las que en aquellos años consiguen tener una voz que resuena en todo el país.

La Segunda República hace que la igualdad de sexos deje de ser un sueño y con la nueva Constitución, en 1931, las mujeres, de 23 años o mayores, no solo que pueden votar, pero también tienen posibilidades iguales de ser contratadas como los hombres, pueden participar oficialmente en partidos políticos e incluso pueden ser elegidas para posiciones dentro del gobierno. Un artículo relacionado con los derechos de la mujer, el artículo 43, más exactamente, se redacta como sigue:

La familia está bajo la salvaguardia del Estado. El matrimonio se funda en la igualdad de derechos para ambos sexos, y podrá disolverse por mutuo disenso o a petición de cualquiera de los cónyuges, con alegación en este caso de justa causa ... (Constitución, 1931, Artículo 43).

*Sin embargo el derecho al divorcio por parte de las mujeres no se aprueba hasta el año 1932. Aunque España tarda un año más, después de redactar los artículos de la nueva Constitución de la Segunda República, en adoptar la ley que otorga a las mujeres el derecho de divorciar, se hizo de tal manera que llega a ser uno de los más progresistas.*

En 1931, el sufragio femenino es posibilitado tras el debate entre Clara Campoamor (Partido Radical) y Victoria Kent (Izquierda Republicana), ganado por la activista Clara Campoamor. Se aprueba el voto femenino con 160 votos a favor y 121 en contra. La población del país está dividida en cuanto al tema, por lo tanto hay mujeres que defienden, pero también hay mujeres que se oponen a la aprobación de este derecho. A primera vista puede parecer raro. Si se analiza más a fondo el tema, es bastante fácil entender el motivo.

En el número 14248 del periódico *Heraldo de Madrid* de 1931 aparece una rúbrica dedicada a las dos más importantes mujeres políticas del país. Dos universitarias, de entre las muy pocas en aquella época, que tienen

visiones públicas, oficiales, pero las cuales son opuestas la una a la otra: Clara Campoamor, política y defensora de los derechos de la mujer y Victoria Kent, la primera mujer en recibir el título de Directora general de prisiones. El pasaje fue publicado como sigue:

Mientras Clara Campoamor es decididamente partidaria de conceder el voto femenino, Victoria Kent se opone tenazmente porque no cree que las mujeres de la aristocracia y de la burguesía sientan la República. (Heraldo de Madrid, 1931)

No obstante Victoria Kent es criticada por varias voces de haberse aprovechado de la libertad y de los derechos por los que muchas luchan sin ahora ayudar a que el resto puedan disfrutar de los mismos.

Mencionables partes del discurso del 1 de octubre de 1931 de la abogada Campoamor serían:

La disminución del analfabetismo es más rápida en las mujeres que en los hombres y que de continuar ese proceso de disminución en los dos sexos, no sólo llegarán a alcanzar las mujeres el grado de cultura elemental de los hombres, sino que lo sobrepasarán. Eso en 1910. Y desde 1910 ha seguido la curva ascendente, y la mujer, hoy día, es menos analfabeta que el varón. [...] Yo, señores diputados, me siento ciudadano antes que mujer, y considero que sería un profundo error político dejar a la mujer al margen de ese derecho, a la mujer que espera y confía en vosotros. [...] Cada uno habla en virtud de una experiencia y yo os hablo en nombre de la mía propia. Yo soy diputado por la provincia de Madrid; la he recorrido, no sólo en cumplimiento de mi deber, sino por cariño, y muchas veces, siempre, he visto que a los actos públicos acudía una concurrencia femenina muy superior a la masculina, y he visto en los ojos de esas mujeres la esperanza de redención, he visto el deseo de ayudar a la República, he visto la pasión y la emoción que ponen en sus ideales. (citada por Barreira D., 2018)

En su famoso discurso, Clara Campoamor, como se puede ver, habla sobre el analfabetismo y es un hecho que hasta entonces por cada 17.000 varones solo 1 mujer llegaba a atender a la universidad.

La mujer, en España, no tenía el derecho de estudiar, no antes de la Segunda República. Aunque las mujeres podían estudiar en la universidad, en España, a partir de 1910, esto solo era posible si tenían un permiso espacial del Consejo de Ministros. Es así pues que la joven República se convierte en la época de mayor transformación para el sistema educativo español, la cual permite el acceso del sexo femenino a la educación formal. Los artículos 49 y 50 de la Constitución de 1931 establecen las líneas generales del nuevo sistema educacional que incluye a todos los ciudadanos del país, indiferentemente de la clase social de la que provienen o el sexo de los estudiantes.

### ***El estatuto de la mujer después de la Guerra Civil***

La instauración del Gobierno de Franco significa un gran retroceso para la sociedad española, especialmente para la mitad femenina de la población que se ve forzada a volver a lo que significaba el tiempo antes de la Segunda República. Es decir, deben volver a un tiempo en el cual no son reconocidas como partes activas de la sociedad, en el que se dedican solamente al cuidado del hogar, al cuidado de los niños y muy pocas a trabajos como la costura, por ejemplo. Con el fin de la guerra el derecho a la educación es nuevamente reservado a los varones. La dictadura llega a su fin en 1975 con la muerte de Francisco Franco.

El cambio de república a dictadura no es muy fácil para la población española y para las mujeres aún menos. Para algunas de ellas la vuelta atrás debió de parecer imposible porque muchas mujeres se suicidaron, comenzado el régimen. Obviamente, no todas las que no pudieron incorporarse en la sociedad española bajo el mando de Franco se quitaron la vida, pero intentaron protestar. Por cualquier intento de pedir ciertos derechos recibidos durante la Segunda República, son encarceladas, al igual que los que públicamente se oponen al gobierno. Tan grande era el número de mujeres que se oponían al gobierno franquista que las cárceles de España no tenían el espacio suficiente para incorporarlas.

### ***Nombres que influenciaron el estatuto de la mujer antes y después de la Guerra Civil***

Una de las mujeres que ayudaron a la evolución política y social de la población femenina en España fue Concepción Arenal, una diplomada de derecho, periodista y escritora que mediante sus trabajos trajo a la atención del gobierno y otras partes de interés no solo la situación de las cárceles de hombres pero también la de las de mujeres, sin hacer diferencia entre sexos. Es una sufragista femenina del siglo XIX y un importante personaje precursor al feminismo en España.

En sus obras Concepción Arenal intenta demostrar que las diferencias biológicas entre hombres y mujeres no hacen que las mujeres sean menos capacitadas para estudiar en cualquier ámbito educacional, incluido el universitario. Las teorías de la abogada Arenal son fundamentales para el feminismo.

Muy importante para la lucha por los derechos de las mujeres es Emilia Pardo Bazán, una feminista, de la clase social alta. En sus obras literarias siempre aparecían ideas que apoyaban las de modernización de

España, la educación femenina y la igualdad de géneros, tanto en derechos como en oportunidades. Emilia Pardo Bazán fue la que propuso a Concepción Arenal para la Real Academia Español y aún rechazadas constantemente sus proposiciones de mujeres en funciones altas en el ámbito educacional llegó ulteriormente a ser la primera en ocupar una cátedra de literaturas neolatinas en la **Universidad Central de Madrid**. Fue conocida también por sus varios enfrentamientos con José María de Pereda sobre el tema de la mujer académica, ya que el señor de Pereda hizo pública su opinión de que las mujeres no podían ser académicas.

Uno de los nombres más famosos durante la Guerra Civil de España es Dolores Ibárruri. También conocida como “La Pasionaria”, Dolores Ibárruri, la dirigente del Partido Comunista de España, es una de las más conocidas mujeres en la España del siglo XX. Llega a la fama gracias a su discurso radiofónico, emitido el 19 de julio de 1936, desde Madrid, conocido bajo el título *No Pasarán*. Estas dos palabras se convierten en las favoritas del bando republicano y se utilizan para la propaganda. Finaliza su discurso con una frase que le asegura un sitio permanente en la historia del país:

El Partido Comunista os llama a la lucha. Os llama especialmente a vosotros, obreros, campesinos, intelectuales, a ocupar un puesto en el combate para aplastar definitivamente a los enemigos de la República y de las libertades populares. ¡Viva el Frente Popular! ¡Viva la unión de todos los antifascistas! ¡Viva la República del pueblo! ¡Los fascistas no pasarán! ¡No pasarán! (Dolores Ibárruri, 1936)

## Conclusión

La lucha liderada por las mujeres para ser reconocidas como iguales, especialmente en el ámbito educacional y para tener los mismos derechos y oportunidades que los hombres, empieza años antes del comienzo de la Guerra Civil, con un impacto muy profundo. Durante la Guerra Civil son reconocidas como más que simples seres inferiores a los hombres que no se deben involucrar en la política o en los estudios académicos, seres que no son biológicamente capaces de hacer los mismos trabajos y que deberían cuidar del hogar y engendrar hijos. Llegan a ser vistas como iguales, en ciertos ámbitos sociales, son representadas en obras artísticas y pueden moldear su imagen a un nivel más cercano a la realidad. Es verdad que fueron también utilizadas como incentivos para los hombres o que se les ofrecían trabajos “tradicionalmente femeninos” aunque eran milicianas. Pero las pequeñas victorias de las que gozaron las mujeres se puede decir que fueron pasos grandes para la lucha contra la discriminación de género y para la igualdad de derechos entre hombres y mujeres.

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# Frida Kahlo y la pintura del dolor.

## La alteridad como catarsis

GEORGIANA RALUCA STRUGAR<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen.** Frida Kahlo, artista hispanoamericana que redefine la estética de lo bello, se empeña en crear un arte peculiar que la ayude a redefinirse como ser humano. Ella se dedica a un largo proceso de autocreación, en el que la imagen espejea la existencia más íntima de nuestro sujeto. Frida se reinventa sin cesar, desvelando su intimidad oculta y pintando una multitud de representaciones. En consecuencia, la alteridad hace posible el autoconocimiento y la reconfiguración de su cuerpo mutilado. El cuadro será el territorio donde la otredad es posible, permitiendo la convivencia de todas las Fridas: niña o adolescente, enamorada, casada, herida, divorciada, enferma, idealizada, tehuana o mártir. Frida, cuyo cuerpo es santuario y reliquia a la vez, muere y renace para reinventarse continuamente, se vuelve titánica y crea un lenguaje pictórico sin precedentes en la historia del arte.

**Palabras clave:** *arte, metamorfosis, otredad, autorrepresentación, rebelarse, autenticidad, deconstrucción.*

Con una trágica y asombrosa experiencia de vida, marcada por varias enfermedades del cuerpo y del alma, Frida Kahlo, ícono del arte universal, consigue liberarse y curarse a través del arte. Buscamos demostrar que su creación es puramente catártica, la que permite el reencuentro consigo misma. Por consiguiente, la alteridad tendrá un papel importantísimo, ya que dará lugar a la transformación, una metamorfosis liberadora. Frida se pinta a sí misma para ser contemplada y su cuerpo siempre va desvelándose ante la mirada de los espectadores. La alteridad será catártica, purificación y liberación del propio cautiverio. La pintora retrata una multitud de Fridas que conviven entre sí, la mujer enamorada, casada, divorciada, herida, idealizada o abandonada, y da lugar, de esta manera, a una infinidad de posibilidades.

Si a lo largo de la historia la mujer es en el mundo patriarcal solo objeto de la representación, ella sigue careciendo de autonomía en la época de Frida. No es nada más que una alteridad, cuyas esencias palidecen en comparación con la naturaleza masculina. Lo que nos interesa ver aquí es el

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modo en el cual Frida se define claramente como un contraejemplo de ello. Frida resalta como diosa y es capaz de gobernar un país predominantemente patriarcal. Toda su obra sobresale al estar en continua búsqueda de reflexión y autoconocimiento. Estos son los dos pilares en torno al cual gira su existencia entera. La predilección por tales colores y formas es parte de un proceso evidente, pintarse a sí misma para devolver su cuerpo. Análogamente, tener en posesión el rostro ideal es resultado de una pintura llena de elementos distintivos: cejas pobladas, bigote acentuado o labios pintados. Asimismo, no cabe ninguna duda de que Frida se distingue como prototipo de sensualidad. Frida rechaza todo tipo de ocultamiento. El rostro sereno y la fuerza estoica nos revelan su talento camaleónico y la intimidad del ser humano. Patricia Mayayo, biógrafa acreditada de Frida Kahlo, plantea un problema oportuno con respecto a la idea anterior:

Se vuelve especialmente espinosa en el caso de una mujer artista como Kahlo: ¿cómo construirse un Yo que no se vea filtrado a través de la mirada masculina? ¿Cómo traducir la experiencia del ser mujer sin reiterar en los estereotipos habituales sobre lo femenino? ¿Y, sobre todo, cómo representar una figura, la de la mujer artista, que no ha tenido cabida, hasta bien entrado el siglo XX, en el imaginario colectivo? (Noelia Domínguez Romero, 2014, p. 61).

Ahora bien, deconstruir y reordenar el mundo desde una perspectiva femenina tienen como resultado la reconstrucción de la mujer en todos sus sentidos. Frida trasciende las convenciones doctrinales e imperantes de su tiempo y supera los límites: “Rompió tabús que afectaban especialmente al cuerpo y la sexualidad femeninos” (Noelia Domínguez Romero, 2014, p. 62). Toma consciencia de vivir en una época agitada y, fruto de la vanguardia suramericana, Frida logra crear modelos mentales nuevos para que las mujeres de su época lo aprovechen. Estos nuevos códigos, y aquí nos referimos a la autorrepresentación, rompen con la tradición y contribuyen a un cambio de paradigma. Sujeto significa presencia y solidez, pero también alternancia y vacilación. Frida se hace visible cuando se pinta a sí misma, aunque eso implique algunas limitaciones. En tal sentido, la representación de Frida tiene sus propios límites, porque definir algo siempre significa excluir otra posibilidad. ¿Es, sin embargo, el caso de Frida uno particular?

Frida Kahlo pinta una variedad de representaciones, lo que nos hace pensar en la libertad de que está disfrutando la artista. Los críticos de arte han identificado en su obra variaciones del personaje, atribuidas a varias etapas de su vida: infancia, adolescencia, madurez y también vejez. En *Mi nana y yo*, el cuerpo infantil contrasta con el rostro adulto. Su nodriza, una indígena con cara oscura, remite a la inspiración precolombina, mostrando que es la sangre de la indígena la que corre por sus venas. Las glándulas mamarias en

forma de raíz y las gotas de leche unen el niño con la madre mítica y recuerdan, una vez más, su procedencia. No falta la vegetación lujuriente, fruto de una lluvia de leche, blancas lágrimas de la Virgen María. *Autorretrato con traje de terciopelo* nos presenta a una Frida joven e idealizada: una silueta elegante similar a un perfil renacentista, con rostro embellecido y delicado. Frida adulta es protagonista en *Pensando en la muerte*, cuya composición alude a la vida de ultratumba. En la mitología precolombina, la muerte está seguida por renacimiento, siendo un tránsito a otro mundo. El cráneo pintado en la frente se opone al verdor exuberante como fondo, símbolo de origen indígena de la vida. Otra vez, esta dualidad vida – muerte, luz y tiniebla, invita a una meditación inédita sobre la muerte. Con una mirada triste y resignada, Frida se metamorfosea creando su propio escenario teatral. Al pintar *La venadita o el ciervo herido*, la artista comparte con el público su dolor físico y emocional, un largo y triste preludio de la muerte. La mujer metamorfoseada en animal es víctima de la caza, del azar implacable. El cuerpo parece estar en movimiento, por la disposición de las patas, pero cae paralizado, hito de nueve flechas. Este autorretrato remite indudablemente a la muerte agónica, pero un aspecto sobresaliente sería la serenidad del ciervo, que da la impresión de no sentir el dolor, lo que podría simbolizar la alegoría de estar muerta en vida. Otro hecho digno de mencionar es la presencia de los cuernos, aunque Frida se representa a sí misma como cierva. La cornamenta de gran tamaño remite a la dualidad femenino – masculino y a un evidente dimorfismo sexual. Si los cuernos indican la edad del animal, identificamos en el cuadro nueve puntas, lo que alude análogamente a un período de nueve años, el que ha transcurrido desde la relación amorosa de Diego con su hermana Cristina. Aunque Frida está brutalmente herida, ella permanece fuerte y digna. Vemos así que la fuerza estoica es parte integrante de su reconstrucción, porque su cuerpo híbrido, frágil y sangriento, no emana angustia, sino fortaleza. Una vez más notamos la fuente mitológica en la que Frida se inspira, aquel imaginario precolombino que creía que la pierna derecha está representada por un ciervo, de aquí la predilección por este animal. Además, según el calendario azteca, el nacimiento de Frida corresponde al día número nueve. Todas estas coincidencias recuerdan una más: este número como símbolo del infierno, formado por nueve etapas. Si volvemos al dimorfismo sexual, deduciremos que la autorrepresentación de Frida con características tanto femeninas como masculinas refleja su propia sexualidad, un hermafroditismo muy característico a la tradición mesoamericana. Esta mezcla de elementos precolombinos y cristianos (la muerte como mártir) destapa la construcción multicultural de Frida, una realidad que permite una alternancia de géneros. Ella juega con una yuxtaposición de rasgos para explorarse a sí misma, dinámica y completamente.



El cuerpo mutilado y fragmentado hace de *La columna rota* un símbolo del dolor que Frida sufre debido a las lesiones. El personaje aparece semidesnudo, con una columna jónica sustituyendo su columna vertebral. Además, su tronco está rodeado por un corsé ortopédico. En la parte de abajo hay una sábana blanca colgante, que da la impresión de puridad y fragilidad. Una multitud de clavos hieren su cuerpo, pero Frida resiste estoicamente. Las lágrimas blancas saliendo de sus ojos y la sábana con cromática similar hacen de Frida un mártir cristiano que afronta su condición con serenidad. La aridez del fondo remite tanto a la incapacidad para tener hijos como a la soledad que rodea a nuestra artista a lo largo de toda su existencia. Por un lado, ella se construye como mártir, y, por otro lado, se define como una instancia patriarcal. Como acto recurrente, Frida plasma la trágica experiencia de su existencia en la mayoría de sus obras y busca curar las heridas que van atormentado su vida. La creación de una perpetua dualidad vida – muerte le permite sobrevivir y triunfar, hasta cierto punto, ante la muerte. Frida soporta el dolor, pero ama y se construye a sí misma como estatua. Toda la fragilidad llega a ser vitalidad. Con un silencio valiente, Frida se muestra radiante, solemne, noble, consiguiendo la conquista: la sobre el dolor implacable y la fragmentación del cuerpo. Estos incesantes cautiverios, la deconstrucción y expropiación del cuerpo nos permiten la exploración de su intimidad más profunda y el análisis de cómo ha superado los límites del pensamiento patriarcal.

Una visión siniestra reina en *Sin esperanza*, cuadro pintado en 1945, nueve años antes de su muerte. Durante estos años, Frida se ve sometida a unas dietas de engordar, ya que el adelgazamiento le produce más y más daño. La mujer aparece postrada en la cama, desnuda, pero cubierta con una sábana en las que se ven pintados microorganismos microscópicos. El caballete soporta un embudo compuesto por los alimentos que le están prohibidos. El cráneo de azúcar es lo que salta a la vista, remitiendo, de nuevo, a la muerte. Una vez más, el paisaje desértico encapsula toda la soledad a la que ella está condenada. La referencia a la muerte es bastante velada, pero indudable.

En *Hospital Henry Ford*, Frida aparece en la hipóstasis de la maternidad fracasada. Este cuadro será una de las representaciones más llenas de simbolismo relacionado con la interrupción de un embarazo. El panorama industrializado del fondo sitúa el aborto en un contexto determinado: la estancia en Detroit. La cama flota en el aire y la mujer está rodeada por seis formas más bien abstractas que van unidas con su cuerpo por filamentos de color rojo, como si fueran cordones umbilicales. Un lugar importante dentro del cuadro lo ocupa el feto masculino, aquel “Dieguito” tan deseado. Si el caracol hace referencia a sus largos e innumerables intentos de tener hijos, la pelvis flota como la responsable de esta tragedia. La flor es símbolo del

instinto sexual, pero también de la trascendencia. En la mitología precolombina, las flores están percibidas como prolongación de la vida, más allá de la muerte. La orquídea también se asocia a la fecundidad por su multitud de semillas. La vida sigue la renovación cíclica de las plantas y la continuidad rítmica: nacer, crecer, madurar, reproducirse, morir, sembrar y hacer la cosecha. Quedan dos elementos más para comentarlos: una máquina simbolizando la procreación y el torso de yeso, la feminidad. Debemos mencionar que el cuadro sigue las características del exvoto: el tamaño reducido, la técnica empleada, la descripción de un evento trágico y la inscripción en la cama. Aunque falta la reproducción concreta de la divinidad protectora, sabemos que ella se muestra representada por el hospital Henry Ford, en el cual ella logra salvar su vida.

Frida – esposa es protagonista en *Frieda y Diego Rivera*, cuadro visto como retrato de boda. Diego, representado como pintor, lleva en su mano derecha una paleta y cuatro pinceles, lo que sugiere su talento artístico, el poder creador. Los dos miran al espectador, pero permanecen reservados. Frida lleva puesto un mantón rojo, lo que anunciará la infelicidad de más tarde y la relación complicada que ellos tienen durante sus matrimonios. Pese a su continua infidelidad, Frida mitifica a su esposo y lo admira como pintor. Lo pinta monumental, duro, desproporcionado. En cambio, Frida es más pequeña y frágil, con los pies minúsculos. El punto central del cuadro es la unión de sus manos, símbolo del amor sincero. En la parte superior, una paloma guarda una inscripción que dice así:

Aquí nos veis, a mí, Frida Kahlo, junto con mi amado esposo Diego Rivera, pinté estos retratos en la bella ciudad de San Francisco, California, para nuestro amigo Mr. Albert Bender, y fue en el mes de abril del año 1931 (Emilia Bolaño, 2015).

Mezclando elementos surrealistas y primitivistas, Frida sorprende mejor que nadie el espíritu de su violento y misterioso país, que no cesa de extrañar hasta el momento presente.

Ya admitidas las alteridades antes comentadas, ahora podemos afirmar que todo su esfuerzo artístico es un enfoque catártico, cuya meta final es la catarsis. Por consiguiente, la purificación y la liberación del yo vienen como efecto de una intención constante de salvarse. En este círculo que se crea todas las Fridas conviven entre sí: Frida niña con Frida joven, Frida enamorada, Frida casada, Frida americana, Frida enferma, Frida divorciada, Frida herida, Frida rota, Frida idealizada, Frida animal, Frida tehuana o Frida mártir. Esta multitud de alteridades equivale a una libertad total que la artista sabe aprovechar. La pintura es el reino de su libertad, territorio donde la otredad es posible. Los cuadros permiten la transformación, la metamorfosis

del alma y la transformación en escena teatral. Ellos facultan la metalepsis, ya que Frida se define a sí misma a través de autorrepresentaciones.

Por consiguiente, el arte tiene función purificadora: da lugar a una infinidad de posibilidades, revela la belleza y la desgracia de su alma, muestra las esencias y permite una mirada en la interioridad. El lenguaje artístico libera del yo esclavizado, normativizado por los cánones históricos. Las aspiraciones divergentes ya no corresponden más a la conciencia patriarcal, aquella tradición moldeada por siglos de normas prediseñadas. Nuestra artista concibe un sujeto libre que impera sobre sí misma. Es un sujeto elocuente, rebelado contra las normas preexistentes. Al pintar estos cuadros se aleja del dogma estético, penetrando el espacio público con vigor. El acto de autorrepresentarse equivale a exteriorizarse, a exponerse al público, a desnudarse hasta lo más íntimo.

El yo se desdobra y Frida juega con la imagen del doble, tan recurrente en la estética surrealista, a que Frida pertenece. El doble lo dan el yo que pinta y el yo que resulta pintado. De este modo, Frida Kahlo crea una especie de contrarrelato que va dirigido contra los cánones artísticos vigentes. Una figura femenina, a veces masculinizada o asexuada, trasciende los límites y se reinventa a sí misma. El yo nos habla sobre él pasando por un filtro personal, no por la óptica de los otros. Frida sale al exterior con plena conciencia de su mundo interior. Al fin y al cabo, Frida se crea como artista al objeto de definir su identidad, auténtica y verdaderamente.

Aunque lucha constantemente con la finitud humana, Frida logra configurar su identidad peculiar. A través de la pintura ella se busca a sí misma, pero también se abre el espacio propicio para el encuentro con las otras identidades. Sería conveniente considerar su deconstrucción como parte natural de la vida. En este sentido, cada existencia humana vincula la vida a la muerte como única entidad. Es el enfoque artístico el que la aviva, a pesar de que Frida sigue agonizando hasta su último aliento.

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# La dimensión existencial y el carácter metaficcional en la obra *Niebla* de Miguel de Unamuno

MARIA-GEORGIANA VINTILĂ<sup>1</sup>

**Resumen:** El propósito de este artículo es abordar el tema de la naturaleza existencial y el conflicto interior del ser humano, tal como se distingue en la obra *Niebla* del escritor español Miguel de Unamuno. Para alcanzar este objetivo, es necesario evidenciar las características particulares de la escritura, entre las que se encuentran las técnicas narrativas innovadoras a las cuales recurre el autor en su “nivola”, como el uso de la autorreferencia, el interés por las estructuras narrativas o la construcción de una relación única con los lectores, estos últimos encontrándose, inevitablemente, en la imposibilidad de permanecer pasivos frente a la problemática que propone Unamuno y en un proceso de identificación con el protagonista, Augusto Pérez, y con el mismo autor, durante este viaje por la “niebla” de la existencia humana. Asimismo, hay que tener en cuenta los conceptos filosóficos y psicológicos puestos en marcha por la historia y por sus personajes simbólicos.

**Palabras clave:** *autorreferencia, nivola, metaficción, niebla, realidad, sueño, existencialismo, inmortalidad.*

## Introducción

### *El autor y el contexto cultural, histórico, político y social*

La obra *Niebla* de Miguel de Unamuno fue escrita a inicios del siglo XX, en 1907, y publicada por la Editorial Renacimiento en 1914. Esta obra representa uno de los ejemplos clásicos de la novela moderna, por la presencia de los constantes modernistas, Unamuno siendo igualmente un precursor de la postmodernidad y del existencialismo y utilizando en sus obras conceptos de interés filosófico y religioso. En un tiempo de grandes cambios en el pensamiento intelectual y en un contexto de crisis moral, política, social y, al mismo tiempo, epistemológico en España, movimientos como el realismo, el naturalismo y también el positivismo habían comenzado a perder el interés

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del mundo cultural, dejando lugar para el desarrollo del modernismo, iniciado por Rubén Darío. Miguel de Unamuno, representante del grupo de escritores, ensayistas y poetas españoles, la Generación del 98, introduce en su literatura la tendencia de transferir el enfoque del plan exterior social, macroscópico, al microcosmos, al plan interior, psicológico. Él inventa, junto con *Niebla*, un nuevo género narrativo, la “nivola”, que se centra en el diálogo y el monólogo como maneras de comunicar de los personajes, poniendo énfasis en la estructura narrativa más que en el estilo. De esta manera, el autor, considerado, por consiguiente, vanguardista, trata de evitar que la crítica pueda catalogar o comparar *Niebla* con otras obras. El propósito de este proceso novelesco es de concentrarse en lo invisible, impalpable, irracional, y alejarse de lo obvio, tal como lo sugiere el título, “niebla”, a través de la técnica de las sugerencias. Otra característica de la “nivola” es la imprevisibilidad del plan narrativo y de la construcción de los personajes, haciendo este tipo de escritura más verídica, más en concordancia con la realidad, con la vida misma. El universo textual presenta procedimientos literarios llenos de innovación como la interacción entre el personaje y su propio creador o el monólogo del perro dentro del epílogo de la novela.

### Argumento de la obra

*Niebla* cuenta la historia de Augusto Pérez, un hombre huérfano pero rico, viviendo con sus criados, Domingo y Liduvina, que también sirven de consejeros. Lo que un día cambia su vida rutinaria es el encuentro con una bella dama, Eugenia Domingo del Arco, por la cual se queda impresionado durante uno de sus paseos. La sigue a su casa y pregunta por ella a Margarita, la portera del edificio. De esta manera, se entera del nombre de la joven, que ella también es huérfana y vive con sus tíos y que es profesora de piano. Al regresar a casa, estando incapaz de dejar de pensar en Eugenia y en un imaginado futuro juntos, el protagonista le escribe una carta que deja con Margarita, pero la portera le dice que la muchacha tiene novio, determinando a Augusto a empeñarse en conocerla y conquistarla. Confesando sus sentimientos durante una partida de ajedrez en el casino, con su amigo, Víctor Goti, y luego, durante una partida al tute con Domingo, Augusto empieza a preguntarse sobre el amor y el matrimonio y recuerda las enseñanzas de su difunta madre acerca del tipo de mujer con la que debe casarse. Después de platicar de nuevo con Margarita, que le da la noticia del compromiso de Eugenia y su novio, el joven encuentra en la calle un perrito y, porque le da lástima, se lo lleva a casa, llamándolo Orfeo. Se dirige de nuevo a la casa de Eugenia y esta vez, conoce a sus tíos, Don Fermín y dona Ermelinda, que se ponen muy encantados del interés que Augusto tiene por su sobrina y

organizan un encuentro entre los jóvenes. Sin embargo, otra conversación con Víctor lo hace dudar de sus verdaderos sentimientos. Empieza a sentir atracción por todas las mujeres hermosas con las que se cruza en el camino y empieza una relación con Rosario, la muchacha que le plancha la ropa, planeando un viaje con ella, al seguir el consejo de Domingo, de entenderse con las dos mujeres. Aunque Eugenia lo rechaza, viendo que su familia tiene problemas económicos, Augusto se ofrece a pagar la hipoteca de la casa, lo que enfada a la joven. Su novio, Mauricio, un hombre desempleado, la aconseja que se case con Augusto Pérez y utilice su dinero para poder estar juntos en secreto. En una entrevista con Augusto, el filósofo Antolín Sánchez Paparrigópulos le explica que la única manera de entender los misterios de la psicología femenina es casarse, así que, después de saber que Eugenia y su novio ya no están juntos, le pide matrimonio de nuevo y ella acepta. Llega hasta hacerlo conseguirle un trabajo a Mauricio y junto a él, que viene a darle las gracias a Augusto, tratan de engañarlo, diciéndole que Mauricio se va a ir con Rosario, lo que también desconcierta al protagonista. Sin embargo, antes de la boda, Augusto recibe una carta de Eugenia en la que la mujer le cuenta toda la verdad y que ella es la que se va a fugar con Mauricio, porque se aman. Desesperado, piensa en suicidarse y decide irse a Salamanca a ver al escritor Miguel de Unamuno, autor de un ensayo sobre el suicidio. Al llegar allí, Unamuno le dice que él no existe en realidad, que no es más que su creación, un “ente de ficción” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 36) y que no se puede tomar la vida, el que lo va a matar siendo el autor mismo. Muy confuso y arrepentido de su intención, Augusto le suplica a Unamuno que no lo mate, pero, al no lograr convencerle, le dice, antes de partir, que él también se va a morir, junto a todos sus lectores y que es, a su vez, una ficción creada por Dios, palabras que perturban a don Miguel. Augusto vuelve a casa triste, reflejando en lo que ha sido su vida, y le dice a Liduvina que él es pura ficción. Pide comida hasta el punto de no poder más y le escribe una nota a Unamuno diciendo: “Se salió usted con la suya, he muerto.” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 132). Rechaza la invitación a pasear que le hace Domingo, pero le pide a este que se quede en la cama a su lado. Antes de morir, se levanta una vez más, gritando el nombre de Eugenia. Su perro, al notar que su amo está muerto, piensa en la persona de Augusto Pérez y en todo lo que le debe, y muere de pena a su lado. Unamuno recibe el telegrama de Augusto, arrepentido de haber causado su muerte y, cuando el joven aparece en su sueño, le dice que puede resucitarlo. Sin embargo, el protagonista le llama la atención que eso no es posible, indicando a otro personaje famoso de la literatura, Don Quijote, y que tampoco puede soñar con él de nuevo, anunciando su desaparición definitiva.

## **Análisis de las particularidades de *Niebla***

Entre los temas del libro pueden nombrarse el amor y el deseo, la necesidad de amar y de ser amado, la muerte o el suicidio y la eternidad, la independencia de la mujer, la decadencia de España y la religión, pero el tema principal es la búsqueda de sí mismo del protagonista, la verdadera naturaleza de la existencia humana, el intento de afirmación de la individualidad. La realización del amor o la simple existencia de otra persona es presentada, en la visión de Augusto Pérez, como una manera de alcanzar la realización, la concretización del individuo, una manera de conocerse a sí mismo: “Sólo así llegaré a conocerme... Viéndome en ojos de mujer...” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 100), “El sueño de uno solo es la ilusión, la apariencia; el sueño de dos es ya la verdad, la realidad.” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 46). Pero es el dolor, el sufrimiento, la desgracia que siente con el engaño y el abandono de Eugenia lo que lo hace cumplir su propósito de dejar de sentirse como un hombre más,

como una sombra, como una ficción”, “como un fantasma, como un muñeco de niebla, sin creer en mi propia existencia, imaginándome ser un personaje fantástico que un oculto genio inventó para solazarse, o para desahogarse. (Unamuno, 1991, p. 121)

y de no dudar más de su existencia real. Las preguntas sobre su existencia y su voluntad, su capacidad de elección, que Augusto se hace, al no estar seguro si existe de verdad o solamente es un sueño, el sueño de todos los demás o el sueño de Dios, una marioneta que juega su papel, crean una conexión entre él y el lector.

La construcción de su personaje trágico y confuso, con un aire descabellado y una actitud esteticista, debida a su pasividad, a su preferencia por la contemplación, la simple observación de las cosas, que por la acción y luego, capaz de un amor idealizado, caprichoso, arbitrario, aunque fiel a la figura materna de la mujer, ridiculiza, de una cierta forma, la personalidad humana. Sus deseos de superar su condición existencial se concretizan en el encuentro sexual con Rosario, pero, sobre todo, en la ilusión y en la lucha por Eugenia, el momento en el que ella lo deja para fugarse con Mauricio marcando la amenaza de su identidad como hombre:

Es que no me duele el amor; ¡es la burla, la burla, la burla! Se han burlado de mí, me han escarnecido, me han puesto en ridículo; han querido demostrarme... ¿qué sé yo?... que no existo. (Unamuno, 1991, p. 118).

La muerte de Augusto conduce a una doble interpretación. Por un lado, se puede considerar que el protagonista se salió con la suya y logró suicidarse, rebelándose en contra de su propio creador y evidenciando la muerte de este mismo, junto a él, y la de todos sus lectores. Por otro lado, su dejar de existir es una prueba de la voluntad de Unamuno y de su poder

absoluto como demiurgo, como el Dios del mundo creado: “Cuán lejos estarán estos infelices de pensar que no están haciendo otra cosa que tratar de justificar lo que yo estoy haciendo con ellos.” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 104).

A la crisis existencial del protagonista, Augusto, que piensa quitarse la vida, pero se encuentra en la imposibilidad de asumir la responsabilidad de sus propios actos porque no es más que un personaje y el poder sobre su vida no lo tiene él, sino el autor, el creador, se añade la duda planteada en el mismo Unamuno, que se refleja en los pensamientos y preguntas del lector. A lo largo de la novela, Unamuno construye tres planes de perspectiva: el mundo ficcional de los personajes o una ficción de la ficción, la realidad de la ficción, en la que vive el autor ficticio, el personaje del mismo Unamuno, y la realidad del lector o una realidad de la realidad, del mundo que lo rodea. La obra llama la atención sobre la idea del carácter ilusorio de la vida y representa una metáfora de la existencia humana, característica señalada en el momento en que Augusto anuncia su propia muerte al lector. En consecuencia, la realidad y la metaficción se entremezclan, configurando una cierta moraleja de la historia, acerca del concepto de dependencia de cualquier obra, una dependencia del pensamiento del lector, del simple acto de leer, que la mantiene activada y que mantiene la literatura en vida.

No obstante, el perro Orfeo acompaña a su dueño en cada soliloquio que tiene. A pesar de su permanencia en el segundo plano, toma la palabra en el epílogo de la historia, tomando sus propias conclusiones y expresando sus propias reflexiones, como si le debiera a su amo, Augusto, un homenaje.

Otro personaje relevante para el universo literario de Unamuno y para el carácter autorreferencial y metaficcional de su obra es Víctor Goti, junto con su representación del juego de la “nivola” dentro de la “nivola”, él escribiendo su propia novela que parece similar a la del mismo Miguel de Unamuno: “Mi novela no va a ser novela, sino nivola... Así nadie tendrá derecho a decir que deroga las leyes de su género...” (Unamuno, 1991). Este personaje es también responsable del prólogo del libro, aumentando la confusión entre la realidad y la ficción. Tiene un papel importante en el desarrollo del personaje principal de la obra y en la configuración de su crisis existencial, teniendo el papel de confidente. *Niebla* refleja el racionalismo de Descartes en afirmar la inevitabilidad de las dudas en el pensamiento: “¿Dudas?, luego piensas; ¿piensas?, luego eres.” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 104). Como en la famosa frase de Descartes, “Cogito, ergo sum” (Descartes, 2019), que se traduce “Pienso, luego existo”, Víctor trata de convencer a Augusto de su existencia, de la inmortalidad de su conciencia, en medio de la confusión, de la incertidumbre, de la niebla.

El título enigmático es de carácter simbólico y el concepto de “niebla” es utilizado, a lo largo del libro, como metáfora de la mente y existencia



humana, haciendo referencia a las barreras que existen en frente de la verdad, de la realidad, en frente de la posibilidad de tener una imagen clara sobre la vida y a la frontera inexacta y borrosa entre el hombre de carne y hueso y el “ente de ficción”.

Unamuno también rompe con la tradición del narrador pasivo y con la del lector pasivo, señalando su presencia con introducciones en la historia y hasta con interacciones con los personajes. A través de los recursos de pura metaficción y metalingüismo, de indeterminación lógica y de autorreferencia, el autor llega a expresar sentimientos y emociones dentro de su mundo diegético, enfadándose con Augusto y su atrevimiento de tomar su destino en sus propias manos y luego, arrepintiéndose de su decisión. Al mismo tiempo, el autor plantea en el lector la sensación de que no le queda otro remedio que reflexionar junto con Augusto Pérez.

La dimensión religiosa de la obra establece una analogía entre Dios y Unamuno, entre los personajes y todos los que llegan a leer *Niebla*, planteando la cuestión: ¿En qué medida es lo que nos pasa algo predestinado y hasta qué punto representa algo dejado al azar?

Por último, pero no por ello menos importante, el tono irónico, humorístico, provocativo, con el que está escrita esta obra entretiene a los lectores. Lo que también facilita la lectura es la estructura sencilla y flexible del libro de Unamuno, debida a la atenuación del argumento, a la descripción poco extensa de los espacios, a la caracterización trasplante de los personajes y a la sucesión de contextos y circunstancias en la acción, que solamente sirven para poner en realce ideas filosóficas y la complejidad conceptual de esta escritura. Además, la narración es lineal, con la excepción de unas alteraciones del orden cronológico del relato, que introducen unas partes independientes de la historia, como los problemas de Víctor con su matrimonio y el nacimiento de su hijo, la historia de don Antonio o el estudio de Sánchez Paparrigópulos.

## **Crítica y teorías propuestas**

A juicio de Pollux Hernández, la obra *Niebla* no puede ser analizada siguiendo criterios “discursivos y estilísticos propios de la narrativa tradicional”, el filólogo añadiendo que “es tan ilógica, irracional y neblinosa que no merece la pena tratar de explicarla, sino leerla, disfrutarla, perderse en su jungla onírica” (Unamuno & Hernández, 2014, prefacio). El escritor realiza “un juego de espejos, un laberinto de apariencias y simulacros donde al final lo único real es el propio acto de lectura” (Unamuno & Hernández, 2014, prefacio), que cada uno de nosotros puede realizar, Unamuno ofreciéndoles a sus lectores

el poder de resurrección de la cadena narrativa y de los personajes. Todos estos aspectos giran alrededor del tema de la naturaleza imperecedera del “ente de ficción”, del ser creado, contrariamente al creador mismo.

Los críticos literarios reconocen, en la obra de Unamuno, influencias explícitas de Calderón, Shakespeare, Cervantes o Descartes y también implícitas como la de Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Kant. El lector puede notar, en el universo ficcional de *Niebla*, una inspiración con el origen en la obra de Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño*, junto con los problemas del libre albedrío, de la existencia de una divinidad, de la inmortalidad y el paralelismo entre realidad y sueño, ilusión. Otro impacto indicado por los especialistas es el del modernista americano, William Faulkner, gracias a las conexiones relacionadas con la explotación de la mente humana, las disquisiciones de los personajes y sus monólogos interiores.

Sigmund Freud afirma en su obra *Esquema del psicoanálisis* la existencia de las tres instancias del aparato psíquico del ser humano, el “ello”, lo que ya es establecido, el “yo”, la autoafirmación frente al mundo exterior, las experiencias individuales, y el “superyó”, lo que se recibe del exterior, como normas y exigencias sociales. Lo que pone en contacto *Niebla* y las ideas del padre del psicoanálisis son los conceptos de “yo íntimo”, de existencia, de muerte y de sueño. Augusto le pregunta a Unamuno: “Cuando un hombre dormido e inerte en la cama sueña algo, ¿qué es lo que más existe: él como conciencia que sueña o su sueño?” y este último le responde con otra pregunta: “¿Y si sueña que existe él mismo, el soñador?”. Augusto replica nuevamente: “En ese caso, amigo don Miguel, le pregunto yo a mi vez: ¿de qué manera existe él: como soñador que se sueña o como soñado por sí mismo?” (Unamuno, 1991, p. 125). Este diálogo destaca de nuevo la perspectiva de la vida como sueño, la relación de oposición y convivencia entre la realidad y la ilusión.

## Conclusión

Para concluir, *Niebla* representa una creación literaria llena de innovaciones, Unamuno demostrando, mediante esta obra, su visión única y su talento creador, al utilizar procedimientos literarios como la metaficción o el carácter autorreferencial, la transposición en su propio personaje dentro de la historia. El tema principal de la existencia del ser humano abrumado de dudas tiene como objetivo inducir al lector en la confusión entre la realidad y la ficción, estimular sus perspectivas sobre esta “niebla” que es la vida humana.

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# The Wars of the Roses: Steps Towards Modern Britain

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**Abstract.** Learning history often centers around subjects concerning different wars, their causes, development, main aspect, and most important consequences. These events are the ones that shaped the world we live in now. The same can be applied to the conflict commonly known as “The Wars of the Roses” (1455-1485) which helped construct modern United Kingdom. The present study focuses on examining the causes of the conflict, stemming from the One Hundred Years’ War, and its main repercussions. Previous studies dedicated to the issue have highlighted the character of the conflict, have approached it either from a military or humane point of view, but we feel that few of them managed to encompass it in its entire essence. Thus, the current paper tries to define the strife universally. We will present the information clearly and concisely by detailing the following points: its origin, an overview of the parts involved focusing on certain characters, a rundown of main events and its aftermath, specifically the way it stimulated the creation of the colossus that later became modern Britain. Our hope is that the issue of the paper will manage to bring forth new perspectives regarding the topic.

**Keywords:** *The Wars of the Roses; The One Hundred Years’ War; England; France; medieval kingdoms.*

## Introduction

When one begins the study of history a focal point of interest is usually represented by wars. They are what society tends to remember centuries in the future from the actual events. Conflicts have a great impact on society as a whole, on a nation, on a continent, or the entire world. The aim of this article is to present such an event coherently, usually put under the “colligatory term” (Grummitt, 2013, p.12) of “The Wars of the Roses”. As with anything concerning the Medieval times, more so at the beginning of them, the array of primary sources available to historians is limited to a few, strongly biased, or rather propagandistic, chronicles. Such a situation cannot be avoided and it is a challenge to piece together disarrayed, chaotic events without falling

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into the traps set up by ancestors. History is generally written from the perspective of the winner, with little to no regard for the defeated or oppressed. In this article, we will try to present the events universally, from a multitude of perspectives. In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the subject, the essay will be structured in the following subchapters: introduction, origins, major actors, and repercussions.

## Origins

Always one of the harder parts of describing a historical event is to determine its beginning and end. It all comes down to the opinion of the author that writes the piece. This subchapter will discuss the origins of the Wars of the Roses in a twofold manner: the root of its name and the causes that ultimately led to civil strife.

First of all, it is important to describe exactly what the wars entailed. Chronologically there is a general consensus, at least among non-experts, that the civil wars happened between 1455 and 1485. This view was created by historians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but has suffered changes over time and recently there are divergent opinions on the matter (see, for instance, Webster, 2005, p. 2-13 and Pollard, 2001, p.1-18). If we refer back to the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and even 19<sup>th</sup> century the dates change slightly. Due to the Yorkist propaganda that morphed into the official Tudor version of the events, the wars are placed within the timeline of 1399-1487 (Pollard, 2001, p.6).

This is the interpretation that was popularized by the works of Shakespeare in his historical plays (from *Richard II* to *Henry VIII*). His writings, drawing inspiration from other chroniclers of early Tudor Era, such as Polydore Vergil's history published in 1534, Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* published in 1543 or Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* published in 1548 (Grummitt, 2013, p. 14-15), paint a complex picture which emphasizes the moral element of the civil wars. In this version, the deposition of Richard II established a Lancastrian dynasty which had no true right to the throne (Webster, 2005, p.2). The strife that followed was reduced to a heavenly judgment upon the usurpers that ultimately lost their lives. True peace could only be restored by the conciliation of the rival dynasties. Such divine symbolism was heavily exploited by Henry Tudor at the time of his marriage with Elizabeth York. Thus, the story goes, the red rose of the Lancaster's and the white rose of York was united in the Tudor dynasty. When analyzing the subtleties of Shakespeare's writing one may realize that he juxtaposed political assumptions of his age to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It becomes most evident when we consider how the monarch is viewed. An anointed king was God's

representative on earth. His deposition was offensive to God, punishable by Him, and impossible to justify (Hicks, 2010, p.15). Many authors have underlined the fact that Shakespeare's message to contemporaries was a warning to not rebel against Elizabeth I. There might also be a debate about whether one would rather suffer at the hands of a tyrannical regime or assume the repercussions for overthrowing it (Pollard, 2001, p.10).

The aforementioned narrative is widespread, simplistic, and explicative. All of these elements shunned research on the subject for a while, renewed interest among late medieval historians resurfacing in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moving past the restrictions set by the Tudor myth one finds that the situation is not straightforward. In reality, the phrase "Wars of the Roses" was coined by Sir Walter Scott in his 1829 novel *Anne of Geierstein* (Grummitt, 2013, p.12). His inspiration is probable to have stemmed from the scene invented by Shakespeare in Henry VI, Part I, where the two rival houses pluck roses, immortalized in Henry Payne's Victorian painting (Hicks, 2010, p.16). While it is true that both families had in their repertoire of badges the aforementioned roses, the principal actors of the wars used other symbols. When it comes to royal families, there might be changes in these badges even at an individual level. One might use several symbols reflecting different claims, associations, and objectives (Pollard, 2001, p.6). The red rose is indeed found amongst Lancastrian symbols, but it was adopted as an emblem of the Beaufort's (cadet line of the Lancaster's). The favourite badge of Henry VI was an antelope. Similarly, there existed a Yorkist white rose that was inherited from the Mortimer earls of March. Nonetheless, the badge of Richard, Duke of York was a falcon and fetterlock, the badge of Edward IV was a sun with streamers, that of George, Duke of Clarence, a black bull, and the badge of Richard III a white boar (Pollard, 2001, p.7). Henry Tudor did use the red Lancastrian/ Beaufort rose, but only after his marriage and the message was clearly propagandistic.

Perhaps not as important or moralistic as it is portrayed in the Tudor myth, the Hundred Years' War did have a role in the events of the civil war. In summary, one can describe this as a dynastic struggle. After the death of French king Charles IV (1328), the closest male relative was Edward III (on his mother's side, Isabella, daughter of Philip IV of France). It is not important to the object of this paper to analyze Edward's reasons for starting a war with France. The relevance of the war resides in the fact that he did start the war, uniting the English against the French. This happened in a period when the traditional feudal system was breaking down into new forms (bastard feudalism). The changes deeply affected the social classes and the

way in which the king was perceived by his subjects. The monarchy starts losing some of its “majesty”, along with the element of mystery. This brings the king under greater public scrutiny (Bicheno, 2019, p.19).

The war started by Edward III was dutifully continued by his successor, Richard II. As of 1399, the two conflicts, the civil war and the war with France, began to merge. The reign of Richard II was a highly contested one, an aspect which ultimately led to deposition by Henry Bolingbroke, first son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and Blanche of Lancaster, Richard II's sister (Webster, 2005, p.14). He was crowned as Henry IV, the first Lancastrian monarch if we are to conform to the Tudor Myth.

The next decades are brimming with battles in France, some campaigns such as Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356), Agincourt (1415) being more successful than others (Webster, 2005, p. 13-14). A paramount aspect to grasp is that the war with France was ongoing during the most of the civil strife, but in the sense that a formal peace treaty was not signed until 1475 at Picquigny during Edward IV. After the decisive successes of Henry V, culminating with the Treaty of Troyes in 1420 (by which he was accepted as heir to Charles VI of France and married Catherine of Valois), actual combat on the continent was limited in the next decades. Perhaps the most important contributing factor was the timely death of Henry V in 1422, which left his nine-month son, Henry VI, on the throne.

As it is with any event in history, to wholly comprehend its development and implications one ought to consider its causes. In general, historians agree that certain circumstances facilitate the existence of an immediate reaction which triggers the unfolding of events. The main debate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding the Wars of the Roses concerns “whether the Wars resulted from a long-term shift in the balance of political power between the Crown and greater subject, with a resultant increase in disorder and lawlessness, or whether they were largely the consequence of the shortcomings of Henry VI as king” (Pollard, 2001, p.41). The second idea is a continuation of the famous conclusion reached by K.B. McFarlane, “Only undermighty kings had anything to fear from overmighty subjects” (Hicks, 2000, p. 387). We consider that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, both arguments bringing up valid points. A.J. Pollard follows a similar train of thought. He separates the causes into three categories: long term (impact of bastard feudalism), short term (financial pressure on English landholders, consequences of defeat in France, questions of dynastic legitimacy), and immediate (the clash of personalities and characters of Henry VI, his Queen and principal subjects) (Pollard, 2001, p.41-42).

## Examining Main Actors and Pivotal Events

In the following paragraphs the focal point will be directed towards the development of the conflict. Specialists, in regard to how the conflict progressed, have established a series of conventional stages to differentiate one from another. Each phase focuses on different people according to their relevance at the time. Throughout time there has been a divergence of opinions regarding this compartmentalization. Goodman considered them to be a series of “upheavals” between 1452 and 1497 (Pollard, 2001, p.18). The majority of historians operate with three wars of varying lengths: McFarlane 1450-64, 1464-71, 1483-87, Gillingham 1455-64, 1469-71, 1483-87, Ross 1460-64, 1469-71, 1483-84, Grummitt 1459-64, 1469-71, 1483-87. Pollard has chosen to use a simpler way of describing the events with only two wars: 1459-71 and 1483-87. He concludes that “the wars of 1459-64 and 1469-71 were two stages of the same struggle: The wars of Lancaster and York”. On the other hand, the war of 1483-87 was a struggle between York and Tudor (Pollard, 2001, p.18). Amongst this amalgam of points of view, we will utilize a more classical approach: three wars that happened as follows 1455-64, 1469-71, and 1483-87.

Remarkable characters populate the first stage of the civil war. The key of it all is Henry VI, king of England. Although historians do not agree on many things, the feebleness of mind of the English monarch, his unfitness to rule is an element that benefits from a consensus. While the exact plight of his mind, schizophrenia or not (Bicheno, 2019, p.17), is not of real importance to this paper, what proves significant is that he was a difficult and weak king. Probably we will never know whether the dreadful choices made by Henry were a result of his unsteerable will (Bicheno, 2019, p. 18) or the control which his “evil councilors” had over him. The fact is that the choices made during his reign caused discontent. His succumbing to a catatonic state in 1453-54 allowed the emergence of other important actors on the political scene.

Perhaps one of the more important ones was Richard, Duke of York. A powerful magnate, he managed to bring to the attention of the royalty the popular opinion by linking it to his own goals. From 1450 onwards he openly protested against Henry VI’s governance in a series of proclamations, manifestos and open letters (McCulloch & Jones, 1983, p. 97). Even if he was protesting against bad governance, it was simply easier to contest the king’s dynastic claims considering that York had little support of the magnates and a better claim. He was a descendant of Edmund of Langley (brother of Richard II) and Isabella of Castille. On top of this, York had an ongoing



dispute, fueled by personal reasons, with Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Most historians assume that the squabble has its origins in the early and unresisting surrender of the city Rouen by Somerset (Jones, 1989, p. 303). Among York's most important allies there were Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, and his son, the Earl of Warwick dubbed "The Kingmaker" by posterity.

A fascinating and enigmatic character is Margaret of Anjou, Henry's wife. Following the psychotic break of her husband, she started acting more and more in control of the royal power in the name of her son, heir presumptive. Due to her actions, later propaganda demonized her, creating this persona of a French she-wolf. This aspect becomes more apparent in Shakespeare's plays where she encompasses every masculine attribute directly juxtaposed with Henry's weak, feminine attributes (Lee, 1986, p. 204-205). In reality, the first war was between Richard, Duke of York, and Margaret of Anjou that stepped up to protect the future of the throne after her husband proved incapable of doing that himself. The object of this paper does not concern the military campaigns of the wars, but let it be noted that both sides suffered defeats and victories alike. The end was an unpredictable one.

Perhaps one of the biggest shocks for the Yorkist faction was the death of Richard, Duke of York in the battle of Wakefield in 1460 right after he secured an accord that declared him the heir apparent of Henry VI. His place was taken by his first-born son, Edward, Earl of March. Due to his military prowess he soon rose to the occasion and after the 1461 battle of Towton he was crowned King Edward IV. The last Lancastrian forces were defeated in 1464 at the battle of Hexham which ended with the capture of Henry VI.

Now we enter into the territory of the second war, or rather a continuation of the first one in the opinion of A.J. Pollard (Pollard, 2001, p.18). Between 1469 and 1471 the main combatants were Edward IV against his father's former ally, the Earl of Warwick and George, Duke of Clarence, the monarch's younger brother. The feud between Edward and Warwick has two main reasons: the king's secret marriage to Elizabeth Woodville whilst Warwick was trying to secure matrimony with a Frenchwoman and a possible alliance with Burgundy against France. The king's actions underline the fact that despite his young age (he was only 19 at his coronation), he would not be controlled by Warwick. It was essentially a battle of wills (Bicheno, 2019, p.413). The motivation behind the monarch's brother's alliance with Warwick is fairly simple: it is said that their mother, Duchess Cecily Neville, publicly declared the fact that Edward was not Richard York's son. Thus, the Duke of Clarence felt entitled to the throne. This time around the conflict resolved itself quickly, Edward IV defeating Warwick at the battle of Barnet (1471) and the Lancastrian forces at the battle of Tewkesbury (1471).

Officially, the Lancastrian cause that supported the dethroned king Henry VI, died in the same year as Edward, Duke of Lancaster, the son of Henry VI.

The rest of Edward IV's reign was as calm as one could hope in the context of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Although it is said he managed to secure a solid foundation for his successors, the events that followed proved the opposite. Not even half a year after his death in 1483, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the former monarch's youngest brother, managed to depose his nephew, Edward V, lock him in the Tower of London with his brother, Richard, and seize the throne under the name of Richard III. The duke of Gloucester is perhaps one of the most interesting characters in the Wars of the Roses. One must imagine the Duke of Gloucester as a determined, perhaps arrogant, but resilient person. The discovery of his bones is said to have resolved one of the controversies that clouded his character. He carried one shoulder higher than the other as a result of a serious case of scoliosis. This is thought to explain his habitual lip chewing: he must have been in constant pain (Bicheno, 2019, p.539). Richard ultimately arbitrated the events so that he could claim the crown for himself. In the end, he did not know when to stop and that is what led to his early demise. Perhaps he could have gotten away with usurping the throne as his predecessors did, but the society of the time drew a line at killing his own nephews. There had never been found concrete evidence that Gloucester was the one responsible for the disappearance of the two princes, but at the time the existence of such rumors was enough for the magnates and the commons to distance themselves from him.

Richard's adversaries found themselves a new head for their movement in the person of Henry Tudor. First and foremost, it is crucial to establish who this new character was. After the death of Henry V, his now widowed wife, Catherine of Valois, chose to marry Owen Tudor, a naturalized Welsh person. Later on, the couple had two sons: Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke. Henry Tudor was born from the union of Margaret Beaufort to Edmund Tudor in 1457. Thus, his claim to the throne was a rather indirect one, through the Beaufort line (a cadet line of the Lancaster's, derived from the union of John of Gaunt to his mistress, which later became his third wife, Katherine Swynford). As Hugh Bicheno eloquently said it "the whole of Henry's appeal was that he was not Richard III" (Bicheno, 2019, p.642). The two forces met ultimately at the battle of Bosworth Field on 22 august 1485, a decisive yet small one. Richard III was killed in battle which opened the way for Henry Tudor to become king under the name of Henry VII. Most historians do not consider the end of the Wars of the Roses to be the Battle of Bosworth simply due to the fact that the

new king still had to suppress revolts against the regime in the first years of his reign.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we must take into consideration the aftermath of the Wars of the Roses. The main and most obvious repercussion concerns the two dynasties: York and Lancaster. The male line of the York's was officially decimated with the death of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the same fate which fell upon the Lancaster line with the death of Edward, Duke of Lancaster. The Tudor Dynasty, with its famous monarchs truly shaped the way of English government (the most unbelievable fact being the coronation of two queens, Mary and Elizabeth I). Yet, it is difficult to pin all of the changes to the will of the ruler. The context must also be taken into consideration. When Henry Tudor ascended to the throne the Italian Renaissance was beginning to make its way towards England, with all of the attributes this entails. The world was already rapidly changing, with the great geographical discoveries well underway.

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# Behind The Curtains: A Look at Queen Victoria's Life and Reign

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**Abstract:** The present study focuses on exploring the life and reign of Queen Victoria. Previous studies dedicated to the topic have shown a more generic and widely-known approach of her life, mostly focusing on the political aspects. We will investigate some unknown aspects about this British monarch. Our hope is that the study will manage to offer a new perspective on the biography of a really important ruler of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, detailing her greatest achievements, as well as her low moments, in both public and private matters.

**Keywords:** *Queen Victoria; British monarch; United Kingdom; ruler; reign; politics.*

## Introduction

One of the most notable monarchs in the history of Great Britain is the one and only Queen Victoria. During her reign, the empire was at its peak, and the era was even named after her, the Victorian era. She was a remarkable queen, as well as a good mother and wife. From the moment she ascended the throne a new period began. Victoria was the first female sovereign since Queen Anne's death in 1714 and the youngest monarch since Edward VI, almost three centuries earlier. Her popularity with the public was a result of the unpopular reigns of her predecessors. Her elderly uncles, George IV and William IV, did not help revive the crown's image in the eyes of their subjects. So with this added, the young queen was a breath of fresh air for the nation. She was "Nation's Hope" from an early age, the personification of the country's future, since there were no other legitimate heirs to the throne (M. Paterson, 2008, pp. 22-23).

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## The Early Life

Victoria was born on 24 May 1819 to Prince Edward Duke of Kent and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Her father, Prince Edward, was the fourth son of King George III. Before the birth of Victoria, there was a successor crisis in the British monarchy. The elder sons of the King were estranged with their wives and had no legitimate children or, in some cases, their marriages were not approved by the Crown. As a result, upon Princess Charlotte's death (the only legitimate child of the Prince Regent), the task of continuing the royal lineage and bringing heirs fell upon the younger of the brothers. Prince Edward left his mistress and married Dowager Princess Victoria. Even though the age gap between the two was really big, they managed to have a harmonious marriage. And shortly after the wedding, the Duchess of Kent was expecting a child. They lived initially in the dukedom of Gotha but the Duke of Kent wanted to move to London to not take any risks concerning the legitimacy of Victoria's birth. He was sure that he would outlive his brothers and the crown would come to him and his children. A fortune-teller he had met in Gibraltar predicted that his child would become monarch (Hibbert, 2000, pp. 10-12).

Her name was not planned to be Victoria originally, her parents sent a list of names to the Prince Regent for the christening and the suggested names were Georgina (after the Prince Regent), Alexandrina (after the name of Tsar Alexander of Russia, her godfather), Elizabeth (inspired by Queen Elizabeth I), Charlotte, Augusta, and lastly Victoria/Victoire, after her mother (Hibbert, 2000, p.12). The Regent was not so keen on accepting that there was a new heir to the throne and he sent a list a day before the christening expressing his opinion about the names (Hibbert, 2000, pp. 12-13). He disapproved of Georgina, not wanting his name and the Tsar's to be in contrast in any way, of Charlotte because of his late daughter, and of Augusta which he deemed too majestic. The Prince Regent chose Alexandrina Victoria, and despite the fact that the Duke wanted otherwise, in the end that's how it remained. Throughout most of her childhood she was generally known by her diminutive, Drina. After the christening of Victoria, the Duke and the Duchess still had some financial problems, Edward looked for help everywhere but did not receive the much needed support. In the meantime, the family decided to move to Sidmouth, on the fine coast of Devonshire, where they could relax and enjoy the months of winter. Even though he was a healthy man all his life, Edward caught a cold and an inflammation of the lungs was set in. Shortly after, on January 23 to be exact, he died of pneumonia (Strachey, 2011, pp. 22-24). So it can be stated that Victoria did not really know her father, as he died of pneumonia a year after her birth, and her grandfather, King George III, died six days after her

father's passing. But even though she did not really know her father, she kept a fond memory of him.

Victoria had a rather dull and lonely childhood. She had no siblings, unusual for a royal child. Despite this, the little girl was intelligent and lively, she liked to sing and draw and was gifted with a retentive memory. Throughout her lifetime, she had a really good and close relationship with her governess, Fraulein Lehzen (the daughter of a Hanoverian clergyman and a former governess to Princess Feodora, Victoria's maternal half-sister), whom she had met when she was five years old. Little Victoria spent her time between Kensington and Claremont. In Claremont she was always happier, she really enjoyed spending her time with her uncle Leopold (Strachey, 2011, pp. 26-30).

In 1827, Princess Victoria was declared heir-presumptive by the Parliament, and her mother, the Duchess of Kent, was appointed regent in case of the unexpected death of the King before Victoria's eighteenth birthday. From this point on, Victoria represented the living symbol of the middle classes, hence her mother's political inclinations. But she was still young and the fact that she would become Queen one day was not introduced to her yet. The following year it was decided that she should be made aware of her destiny. This information was introduced to her in one of her history lessons, she was given the genealogical table of the Kings of England. She was surprised and a moment of silence followed this realization. She replied to her governess: "I will be good" (Strachey, 2011, p.33).

Nevertheless, Victoria's journey to become a good monarch began; she studied history, taking an interest in Queen Elizabeth, even being mentored by her uncle Leopold, King of the Belgians, representing at times, a paternal figure for the young princess. She was mostly raised in a feminine atmosphere, under the guidance of Baroness Lehzen, the Duchess of Kent and other feminine figures that surrounded little Drina. And after her uncle Leopold left Britain for Belgium and Princess Feodora married, Baroness Lehzen remained the center of Victoria's life, there was no competitor left for the affection of the Princess. Transitioning to a young woman, Victoria started taking dance lessons and Scripture history (Strachey, 2011, pp. 30-36). Ultimately, she was multilingual, speaking English, French, German, Italian and Latin.

## **The Beginning of Her Reign**

On 20 June 1837, Victoria became Queen, after King William IV's demise. The announcement was made the morning after the King's death, by Lord Chamberlain and Archbishop of Canterbury.

Victoria emerged from confinement into shafts of sunlight, no longer Nesbit's «princess in an enchanted palace», henceforth on penny prints and popular engravings «the Rose of England», a national symbol, a bloom of hope (M. Dennison, 2013, p. 40).

Her first royal act was to ask for an hour alone. But most importantly, she felt like she gained independence from her mother, asking for the bed to be moved from her mother's chamber and to have her own room. Before all the preparations for the new monarch would begin, she took her time to write to two of her favorite people in her life, her uncle Leopold and Feodora. After that she received the company of the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, who would play an important role in her early days as a monarch. Lord Melbourne then read her a draft of the Declaration for the Privy Council and an assembly of advisers appointed by the sovereign was due to take place later in the Red Saloon at Kensington Palace. That day was filled with audiences to various dignitaries and meetings with Lord Melbourne. The young queen followed Leopold's advice closely, "she kept regular hours, rose at eight, signed dispatches until breakfast, and saw ministers between eleven and half past one" (Williams, 2010, p. 266).

From the beginning her short figure caused her commentators to attribute her diminutives, she was called "the little queen" or "her little majesty". But her height would not stop her good intentions of being a good ruler. The diminutives were seen as only the fear of having a female monarch on the throne of Great Britain (Dennison, 2013, p. 42-43).

Her coronation took place almost a year after her accession to the throne, on 28 June 1838. A new era had begun, it was a premiere in the British monarchy, the first female sovereign since Queen Anne in 1714 and not one so young for almost three centuries, since Edward VI. Beloved by her people, her coronation was celebrated with real enthusiasm. Crowds had begun arriving in London days before the event. Victoria was filled with excitement, the night before she could barely sleep. And foremost, she was worried about the things that could go wrong, mostly because she had never attended a coronation herself (Williams, 2010, p.272).

The most important figure in Victoria's life at this stage of her reign was her Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne (1779-1848), who guided her through her first years as monarch. William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne, was the head of the Whig party. He attended the queen daily in his official capacity and dedicated his free time to her as well, the two becoming really close very quickly. Melbourne resembled a father figure to Queen Victoria, providing her with the apprenticeship of the craft, mentoring her in politics and how to be a better ruler. He was obliged to resign in 1839. Faced with the prospect of having Sir Robert Peel (1778-1850) as Prime Minister, Victoria refused to

change her Whig court ladies with Tory ones. Peel, seeing this as a sign of bad faith, refused to form a Government, clearing the way for Melbourne to resume his position as Prime Minister.

After the reelection of Lord Melbourne, the unpopularity of the queen grew. The public was against her actions, her meddling with the position of Prime Minister, they started to call her “Mrs. Melbourne”. With these rumors spreading fast, the urge for her to marry grew higher. Not only the public, but also Lord Melbourne and everyone around her wanted her to marry. She was weary, she did not want to get married at all but her uncle Leopold had other plans, insisting that she should marry her cousin Albert, the second son of Ernest I, sovereign duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. As such, on the morning of 15 October 1839, Victoria had a private meeting with Albert and asked him to marry her. He agreed, they “embraced each other” and the queen felt “the happiest of human beings” (Strachey, 2011, pp. 93-98).

## Marriage

The full title of Victoria’s husband was Prince Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819-1861). Prince Albert was Victoria’s cousin, from his childhood prepared by King Leopold to be Victoria’s match. Born just three months after Victoria, it was made clear from the very beginning that their families wished that they would marry each other.

Albert and Victoria had only met once before being engaged, when they were both seventeen. In 1839, he became one of the most significant figures in Victoria’s life, being betrothed to her. The Queen’s marital status was rushed by the need of an heir. She was the one to propose to him because no one can propose to the sovereign. After three months, on 10 February 1840, they were married at the Chapel Royal in St James Palace. Their relationship was a rarity in royal marriages, being that they married for love. He developed a bond with his wife and learned in time how to make things work with all that was expected of them. It was no doubt Victoria loved him, but she loved power too. She considered that she is going to be a wife for a while but Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland forever. What they both gained was companionship. Especially Victoria who had a lonely childhood and lacked close relationships. She had a small number of close friends but they were not close to her age, examples being Lehzen and Lord Melbourne. Albert would fill this position that was vacant in her personal life (Dennison, 2013, p. 60).

Albert was an unpopular figure at first, being treated as an outsider by her family and by the royal circles. Even though he had no power or position,



he knew a great deal about his adoptive country and was good at helping Victoria in politics or state affairs. Their first child was born in November 1840, Princess Victoria (or Vicky), and eight other children followed in the next years. In 1841 – Prince of Wales (Bertie), in 1843 – Alice, 1844 – Alfred, 1846 – Helena, 1848 – Louise, 1850 – Arthur, 1853 – Leopold, 1857 – Beatrice. During the first two decades of her reign, Albert helped her by deputizing in both ceremonial and consultative capacity. In 1857 the title “Prince Consort” was given to him by the Queen. He had a philanthropic soul and was genuinely interested in cultures and arts. One of his grand ideas was the making of The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations. He envisioned an international monument dedicated to the “blessings of the civilization – peace, progress and prosperity” (Strachey, 2011, p. 143). During the Crimean War (1853 – 1854), Albert and Victoria worked together with a dual governance arrangement. Power was given by the fact that the crown’s powers were now symbolic after the first Reform Bill (1932), and the fact that Great Britain was a constitutional monarchy, where the government actually held more power (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 52-54). Albert died on 14 December 1861 by what was believed to be typhoid fever (according to his doctors). Victoria went into mourning for the rest of her life, wearing only black. She refused to remarry.

### **The Queen’s Children**

Victoria’s children and their marriages will earn her the moniker of “grandmother of Europe”. As previously mentioned, Victoria and Albert had nine children over the course of their twenty years long marriage. The most beloved child of Victoria was her first daughter, Princess Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise (1840-1901), “Vicky” for her family. In 1848, she married Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia, who later became the emperor of Germany and died only three months after of cancer of the larynx. Their eldest son was Wilhelm II of Germany, later known as „Kaiser Bill” of World War I. Princess Victoria had eight children in total and most notably, her daughter, Sophie, married a Greek Prince and later became the Queen of Greece. She passed away on 5 August 1901, only eight months after Queen Victoria’s death.

Victoria’s second son was Prince Albert (“Bertie”). He became King Edward VII in 1901, after the death of Queen Victoria. Victoria and Albert imposed on him a strict childhood, which later became the root of his problems with overindulgence in food, drinking, women and gambling. He was always blamed by his mother for the death of Albert. When he was 19 years old he had an affair with a young Irish actress named Nellie Clifton in

his military barracks. Upon hearing this, the Prince Consort went to speak to him in Cambridge and got ill on the way there. Albert died after a long battle with what today would be diagnosed as stomach cancer, but in those times, the cause of his death was considered typhoid fever. Nevertheless, the grief-stricken queen blamed Bertie for breaking the heart of his father and for his subsequent death. He married Princess Alexandra of Denmark at 22 and had six children with her: Albert, George, Louise, Victoria, Maude and John. His second son, George, became the monarch of the United Kingdom and Maude became Queen Consort of Norway (Charles River Editors, 2012, pp. 55-56).

Princess Alice Maude Mary (1843-1878) was Victoria and Albert's third child. Victoria chose to betroth her to Prince Ludwig of Hesse when she was only 17. He went on to become Grand Duke Louis XIV and the two were married only six months after being introduced. Sadly, their marriage began in the shadow of Albert's death. Alice and Ludwig had seven children: Victoria, Elizabeth, Ernst-Ludwig, Irene, Friedrich Wilhelm (Frittie), Alix and Marie. The loss of her son Frittie weighed deeply on Alice her whole life. Her daughter Alix went on to marry the Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II. She would later be assassinated, along with her husband and children in 1917 by the Bolsheviks, thus ending the royal house of Romanov.

Prince Alfred Ernest Albert (1844-1900) was the Queen's fourth child. Prince Alfred married Grande Duchess Marie, the daughter of Tsar Alexander II of Russia. His eldest daughter, Marie, married the crown Prince of Romania, who later became King Ferdinand I of Romania.

Princess Helena Augusta Victoria (1846-1923) was the fifth child of the couple. She was born prematurely because of Victoria's anxiety with the loss of her Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. She married Prince Frederick Christian of Schleswig-Holstein in 1866. Victoria insisted that Helena and her husband remain in England and the Princess would act as her private secretary (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 58).

The sixth child of the Queen was Princess Louise Caroline Alberta (1848-1939) and she was one of the only three children to witness the horrors of World War II. Princess Louise married a commoner, and even though nowadays it is not such a problem for a royal to marry outside of their status, as exemplified by the marriages of Prince William to Catherine Middleton and of Prince Harry to Meghan Markle, back then it was frowned upon by the high classes. In 1871, she married John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, who later became Duke of Argyll. Queen Victoria was very supportive of the marriage, and so was the Prime Minister at the time, Benjamin Disraeli. The British public grew weary of yet another German marriage. They never had children and he later became an MP (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 58).

Prince Albert William Patrick (1850 – 1942) was the seventh child of the royal couple. He married Princess Louise Margarete of Prussia. He joined the armed forces and rose, in 1902, to the rank of Field Marshall. He later transferred to Canada where he became Governor General (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 59).

Victoria and Albert's eight child was Prince Leopold George Duncan (1853-1884). He married Princess Helena Frederica of Waldeck and he died two years later from hemophilia complications. One of his children, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, was declared a "traitor peer" during World War II for siding with Germany over the United Kingdom. He was also a supporter of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. On the other hand, his daughter, Princess Alice would later become one of the most beloved members of the royal family during the 1980s (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 59).

Princess Beatrice Mary Victoria (1857-1944) was the youngest child of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. Only four years old when her father died, she immediately became Queen Victoria's closest confidante. In her teenage years, Victoria destroyed a potential love match with the French Royal Louise Napoleon. She would not have permission to marry for the next eleven years. Later, after much disagreement with Victoria, she was allowed to marry Prince Henry of Battenberg. The only condition was for the young couple to remain in Britain and they agreed. Her children would rule Spain and her grandson Lord Louis Mountbatten would be the Last Viceroy of India. Her great-grandson, Prince Phillip of Greece and Denmark is currently the husband of Queen Elisabeth II of Great Britain (Charles River Editors, 2012, pp. 59-60).

### **The Business of Reigning**

Queen Victoria went into deep mourning after the death of her husband, Prince Albert. Furthermore, after years of not being in the public eye, her unpopularity grew and almost destroyed the image of the monarchy. Not even her heir, Bertie, could do anything about that. Distrusted by his mother, he was not given any directions to cover for his mother's absence. Notably, he gained sympathy from the public after battling typhoid fever. In 1874, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli succeeded in convincing the Queen to reopen the Parliament and resume her royal duties. She desperately wanted to be given the title of "Empress of India", the Prime Minister and his Parliament gladly obliged and offered her the title (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 63).

During this time in her life she was introduced to John Brown. Being always vulnerable to the male beauty, her advisors brought Albert's old

Scottish ghillie from Balmoral. They became very close and Victoria awarded him a medal for loyal service. When he died, the Queen was heartbroken (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 64).

### **Later years of her reign**

Some highlights of her later reign include the connections made by Victoria with France. In 1843 she paid a private visit to Louis-Phillipe and in 1855, she went to see Napoleon III, reestablishing the cordial relationships between Britain and France. Around 1858, India came under British control and in 1877, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. On 23 September 1896, she surpassed George III as the longest reigning British monarch. In 1887 she celebrated her Golden Jubilee and ten years later, the Diamond Jubilee. Some setbacks during her reign were the Great Famine of Ireland, caused by a potato blight. Victoria tried to help and in 1847 donated to British Relief Association. Queen Victoria passed away on 22 January 1901, ending the Victorian Era. She was succeeded at the throne by her son, King Edward VII.

### **Highlights and Setbacks of the Victorian Era**

The Victorian Era was the period of Queen Victoria's reign. It was a period marked by progress and ingenuity. It was the time of the Industrial Revolution, the first electric telegraph, abolition of slavery, the first modern railroad, The Vaccination Act. Notable figures are Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, Alexander Bell, Oscar Wilde, Emily Bronte and her sisters – Charlotte and Anne.

Naturally, famine is rarely something inevitable due to improbability of the weather and crop failure. But from a political view, the Great Famine of Ireland, also known as the Great Hunger or the Irish Potato Famine, was a huge failure. The Great Famine was caused by a potato blight, a fungal spore that impacted the harvest between 1845 and 1850. The year 1847 was the worst year, known today as "Black '47". This resulted in death, disease and immigration on a large scale. The British Government responded censoriously and with pragmatism, the majority of the English population considering that this was a punishment from God for the Irish for being Catholics and for being "lazy people". And it was not the only famine within and caused by the politics of the British empire, India suffered from this as well, before and during Queen Victoria's reign (Burton, 2017, p. 42-46).

## Religion and Imperialism

The connection between the Victorian era and religion is seemingly a strong one, despite Puritanism being actually in contradiction with Victoria's personality. Today's society regards the Victorian era as stiff, strict and full of chaste morality, even though Victoria and Albert did not consider morality an absolute necessity. Nonetheless, both Victoria and Albert had a good moral compass, they both fought for the abolition of slavery, and soon after marrying Victoria, the Prince Consort went on to become the president of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa. He strongly preached that the Christian faith contradicts the actions of the society that enslaves other human beings. The Queen herself was always a believer in God, and after the death of her husband she fell back on her practical religiosity (Charles River Editors, 2012, p. 65-67).

Under Queen Victoria's rule, Great Britain became a true colonial empire. The United Kingdom ruled over India, Africa, Australia, Canada and even more dominions and protectorates.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, Queen Victoria was the face of the United Kingdom of Great Britain at its peak. Not only she was a worldwide "trendsetter", but she was the one who changed the world we see today, abolishing slavery and revolutionizing the industry, doing some big steps for humanity.

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# Is Freedom of the Press Possible?

## Case Study: A focus on British Media

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**Abstract:** Freedom of the press represents a frequently discussed subject around the world, both in the present and in the past, being a center point of multiple legislative changes. Bearing substantial importance, one of its main aspects, which is also the focus of this current paper, concerns whether it is possible to be put in practice, highlighting the environment of British Media. Previous research has shown a continuous change in the approach to the idea of freedom of the press, identifying trends for different periods and debating the very legitimacy of this freedom. However, the possibility of applying the concept in a dictionary definition manner has not been fully investigated. As such, we have decided to analyze the idea in-depth, by researching the evolution of the situation in the history of legislation. The focus is on media from the earliest recorded laws regarding the matter in Britain to the present day, together with the interpretations and reactions of the society to the implemented changes. Our hope is that the results will bring together the multiple perspectives on the matter creating a balanced image regarding British media.

**Keywords:** *British media, freedom of the press, historical evolution, legislation, society.*

### What Represents Freedom of the Press Today?

The dictionary definition for freedom of the press affirms that it is the right to publish and disseminate information, thoughts, and opinions without restraint or censorship from the government (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2020). It is also a component of the larger freedom of speech and acknowledged as a fundamental part of a democratic society, being included in the laws of countries such as the *1789 Declaration of Human and Civil Rights* in France, the *First Amendment* of the American Constitution, the *Human Rights Act of 1998* in Great Britain etc. However does that mean that freedom of the press as it is described by the above-mentioned definition

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actually exists? In fact it does not, every country also has regulations that limit what an individual or a business can say and write.

In Great Britain the limitations are represented by the laws that affect the freedom of speech of the general public, such as the *Terrorism acts of 2000 and 2006*, the *Official Secrets Act* and even the *Human Rights Act of 1998* itself, in which Article 10 grants freedom of expression but only based on content, subject and within reasonable limitations “necessary in a democratic society”. The reasons for these limitations are in fact other rights that the individual is guaranteed often through the same acts. In Britain the freedom of expressions is limited through the Human Rights Act for the sake of: the right to a fair trial, to respect for private life, to conscience and religion (Bychawska-Siniarska, 2010, p. 11). The press can also be limited by direct orders for the sake of national security through DSMA-notices (*DSMA: About the system*) but these are rarely used. More importantly, there exists an added layer of restrictions in the land of the queen, through self-imposed systems such as *The Independent Monitor For the Press*, *The Independent Press Standards Organization* and, for radio and television, *The Office of Communications*, created under pressure from the government and with the press hoping that the government will not get involved in media matters most of the time. With this we can say that the simple definition of freedom of the press is not in practice today in Britain. However, has it ever been? Is it even possible? To learn the answers to these questions it is important to examine the evolution of British press and learn how it matured and how it got to the form it has today.

## **Examining the History of the Press in England and Britain**

The story of the press and the wish of those in power to directly interfere with it started in England after the introduction, in this country, of the Gutenberg Press (movable type printing technology invented by the German Johannes Gutenberg in 1439). William Caxton is the one who, around 1476, set up the first printing shop for the English people near Westminster Cathedral (Norman Blake, 1991, p. 57). Caxton is also responsible for the start of printing books in English (Norman Blake, 1991, p. 60), thus making them more accessible, previous texts having been written in Latin. For the first years, the printing business was encouraged, the crown even giving privileged status to foreign printers in 1484 so that they would help set it up and flourish in England. Now it was much simpler for information to spread through pamphlets, news sheets or posters and even though not quite yet what we are used to when we talk about the press, these were what was used to spread information, mostly religious and political.

The first laws directly interfering with the contents spread by the English printers started during the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547), in the midst of religious and political change (the separation of the Anglican faith from the Church of Rome and the coming to power of the House of Tudor) that caused public unrest and when the critics became harsher than ever. The king issued acts that censored speech in reference to his majesty and his actions, such as the *First Succession Act* that stated that nothing should be said or printed against his marriage with Anne Boleyn, and the *Treason Act of 1534* that made it so that calling the king in print a heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper to the crown, was punishable by death (Deazley, 2008). More importantly, with these came the *Proclamation of 1538* (Gairdner, 1893, p. 354), that prohibited the importation, sale and publication of English texts from other countries and declared that all authors and printers must allow the Privy Council or their agents to read and censor books before publication, creating a first official censoring body, mainly an attempt to control the spread of religious beliefs outside the newly forming Anglican Faith (the press having proven itself very efficient at spreading beliefs with the Lutheran faith).

The interference with the press continued strongly during the Tudors reign. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1557, after nullifying the proclamation of Henry VIII with the *Second Statute of Repeal*, trying to reverse the English reformation, Mary I issued a royal warrant granting the *Worshipful Company of Stationers* the status of an incorporated company. With this act, the company was the only one that could print and publish books, and was officially responsible for setting and enforcing regulations. To further enforce the control, the queen issued in 1558 a new royal proclamation against heretical and seditious books (Deazley, 2008).

Furthermore, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), the power to regulate the press was not left only in the hands of the above-mentioned company, the queen emitting multiple royal proclamations and the parliament passing multiple statutes regarding treasonous, seditious, libelous or heretical texts. Pushing further these legislations during her majesty's reign, *The Star Chamber* – originally established to ensure the fair enforcement of laws against socially and politically prominent people so powerful that ordinary courts would have probably hesitated to convict them of their crimes – became part of the system that controlled writings. This institution would judge cases of criminal libel, such as statements critical of the king and government.

The Star Chamber started increasing its power and influence but also in corruption, it banned the printing of all news books in the year 1532 and in its way to dominate the English press, the court offered privileges to their



collaborators, such as granting Nicholas Bourne and Nathaniel Butter, in 1638, exclusivity in the right of printing foreign press (Cook & Wroughton, 1980, p.197). This lasted until 1641 when by act of the Long Parliament and in the context of the English Civil War, the Star Chamber was abolished and control of the press collapsed starting a period of true freedom for the press and as such, a boom in political pamphlets and news books dealing with domestic affairs. However, not many lasted for more than a few issues, *The Weekly Post Master*, for example, lasted for only one month and *The Citie Scout* lasted only four months (Morison, 2009, p.31).

Regulating the press however was reinstated, first in the suppression of all newsbooks in 1649 by Cromwell on the eve of Charles I's execution (History of British Newspapers), and afterwards, with the issuing by the Long Parliament of the *Licensing of the Press Act* in 1662, meant to prevent frequent abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed books and pamphlets (this Act was originally meant to last for only two years, but through repeated renewals it lasted until 1695). The Stationers' Company maintained power, printing presses were not to be set up without its approval, the king's men could, under power of a warrant from the king or his secretary, search unlicensed presses at any time and all copyright rights belonged to the publishers not to the authors. As such, the power to control newspapers was shared between the crown and a large company, leaving no freedom for the smaller ones, but this time around the penalties were lighter (Deazley, 2008).

In this new atmosphere of regulation appeared the first true newspaper published in England, namely the *Oxford Gazette* (known today as the London Gazette), published for the first time in 1665. However, the censorship and the lack of rights for the authors led to a multitude of illegal publications complaining about the state of things, such as John Milton's *Aeropagitica* arguing for no control from the state, diversity of opinion and everyone being capable of taking responsibility for their beliefs (Hales, 1974). This led to the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 (Curran, 2002, p.136). For a second time all restraint of the press was gone, it started playing a major role in swaying the public opinion, and becoming an important part in the development of the Glorious Revolution after which, at the insistence of parliament, the new king William III did not interfere with the press. Adding to this, the new middle class that was forming and gaining interest in politics, together with the development of the party system of government, led to the opposition of the parliament to be acceptable and so newspapers and editors began to adopt critical and partisan stances and they soon became an important force in the political and social affairs of the country.

Journalism in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced many great writers such as Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift who approached themes like

the importance of property rights, religious toleration and intellectual freedom. The newspapers became so popular that they started to be printed daily, the first such publication being the *Daily Courant* that appeared in 1702 (History of British Newspapers). And with people having more free time due to advancements in technology, there appeared the general-interest publications, the first one being *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731 (Norman, 2020).

Even within this freedom the government found a way to control the press, through the stamp tax that appeared in 1712 (History of British Newspapers), that made it hard for new smaller newspapers to appear and for the people to buy the now pricier texts. Let's not forget also that journalists could still be restrained by criminal libel law, one example being John Wilkes, a strong advocate for the freedom of the press, charged twice with seditious libel over attacks on George III. However, his arrests increased his popularity with the public and, under pressure, the government was forced to back down (Christie, 2019). During the war with France censorship tightened again and the taxes rose even higher, but the people still found ways to read the news by way of coffee houses that bought a few copies and passed them around (many of these illegal newspapers had revolutionary tones).

In 1855, due to the effort of politicians such as Richard Cobden (Welby et al., 1903, p. 40) that advocated in Parliament, the tax on newspapers was repealed. Freedom from most taxes and proprietors gaining the right for publications (*Copyright Act of 1842*) encouraged the launch of new publications, such as *The Daily Telegraph*, and transformed journalism into an actual profession. This period until 1910 is considered the golden age of journalism. This does not mean there was no political involvement, however. Journalists actually listened attentively to those in power hoping to gain some benefits, thus it is said that an advisor even told Prime Minister Wellington in 1829 he should make his cabinet ministers responsible for secretly "instructing" the papers instead of using a mere parliamentary secretary (Brighton, 2016, p.63). There were even still trials against people that offended those in power, such as The December 1817 Trials of writer and satirist William Hone (he ridiculed the habits of the time and exposed the corruption) who, by defending himself in court against a biased jury, got acquitted on all counts and today stands as an example in the fight for free press (Royle & Walvin, 1982, p.18).

In the twentieth century the press was greatly influenced by the Two World Wars and the Cold War. Wartime issues were urgent and made the press run faster than ever, however it could not run amok in times of conflict and risk destroying the nations spirit or leak crucial government information, so during the First World War, the Ministry of Information was created, and then reformed during the Second World War, being used not only for keeping

information out of the press (with moderate success, satirical war-time drawings being numerous), but also for promoting the existence of patriotic propaganda in the press.

During the interwar period the government loosened its hold on the media allowing it to continue progressing, separate into more and more specialized forms of publication and extend its reach to new forms of communication such as the radio (the first public broadcast happening in 1920 and soon forming an independent organization, the *British Broadcasting Company*) and television (in 1936 the British Broadcasting Company disbanded and reformed as the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation, representing the only channel available on television in the country).

During the Cold War, a certain amount of control remained with the purpose of promoting the reconstruction of the country and controlling the propaganda in the form of the Central Office of Information. Even more importantly, the media was this time around promoted in its road to globalization by the government (Jenks, 2006, p.19), a needed boost in front of the competitiveness of the USA and the USSR, and in 1954 the first independent television channel appeared in Britain, namely ITV.

Ever since multiple laws have been passed and revised trying to keep up with the ever changing medium such as *The Terrorism Act of 2000*, changed in 2006 to make the glorifying of terrorism an offence. As the world returned to peace, self-regulating bodies appeared: the *Press Complaints Commission* or PCC in 1993, the *Independent Television Commission* and the *Radio Authority* (under the *Broadcasting Act of 1990*) that due to the constant evolution of the press have been replaced with the self-regulating bodies of today. The written media, in particular, is interesting as it changed due to a scandal namely the News of the World Phone hacking scandal of 2011. According to the Press Recognition Panel (an organ that was created by The Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press of 2013 as a result of the 2011 scandal), the PCC was replaced by the Independent Monitor for the Press, however journalists did not join this organization and instead they united under the Independent Press Standards Organization, an institution not acknowledged by the Press Recognition Panel. As so, the printed press has yet to sort itself out, or to be sorted out by the government, definitively.

## Conclusions

As we have seen, true freedom of the press has historically only been possible in times of complete domestic unrest such as The English Civil War. Meanwhile, when the nation needed to come together to face an external conflict, censorship hardened and in times of peace the press functioned with

certain rules meant to maintain that peace between the citizens and even self-regulated. However it was never possible to stop corruption from appearing or holes in the regulatory system to be discovered. With this, we have come to learn that, just as Larry Alexander affirms regarding freedom of expression (Alexander, 2005, pp. 185-193), it is important to maintain the freedom of the press through law to avoid the complete banning of certain ideas and criticism (as it happened under the Tudors). However, it is not possible to ignore the context and society morals, there being a need for certain limitations even in freedom, unless we are willing to live in a world defined by possible anarchy. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the press changes together with the world, so if a new political system appeared that allowed for a complete freedom of the press, then humans, being persistent as we are, would be sure to obtain it. But for now, that remains only a theoretical possibility.

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# The United Kingdom: A Geopolitical Approach

MARIAN TOADER<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** The present study looks to examine the actions taken by The United Kingdom as a non-state actor, before and after the implementation of Brexit, using a geopolitical approach. Previous research has shown that the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union brings a multitude of positive and negative effects, depending on which side we are on, as well as what political ideologies we subscribe to. Our objective is to present the readers with a different point of view on the British Exit by providing an in-depth analysis on themes such as the British borders, and how they will change in the near future, a potential backlash in the East of Europe, or the effects that might occur between The Kingdom's long-term trading partners in to name only a few.

**Keywords:** *Brexit, European Union, United Kingdom, East of Europe, in-depth analysis, British borders.*

## British Geopolitics: – An Introduction

Geopolitics is a discipline that represents the interaction between a territory (representing the geographical aspect) and an actor (usually seen as a political presence) of different dynamics. With that in mind, we would like to pave the direction of the article with a quote from Karl Haushofer (b. 1869 – d. 1946), Germany's main geopolitical scholar: "Although our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness of the future, scientific geopolitical analysis enables us to make certain predictions" (Dorpalen, 1942, p. 26).

The study's point of departure presumes an understanding of the conceptual reality noticed during the implementation process of Brexit, and the current position of The United Kingdom as a global leader.

Since its founding, the European Union's goal has been to achieve autonomy through the joint efforts of its members, and its tendency towards independence has become increasingly evident during the integration process. Whether it is the unique currency (Euro), the promotion of diplomacy or the establishment of resisting alliance, the central significance was to increase Europe's autonomy and achieve independence.

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Although joining the European Union on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1973, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland decided to leave the Union following the referendum held on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016. The mutual physical border, represented by the English Channel and the Eurotunnel are the only physical barriers from one space to another, the access of the citizens of the two entities being difficult.

## **After Brexit: – Current British Geopolitical Interest**

### ***The identity card***

The European Union has experienced plenty of different crises in recent years, such as the Crimea conflicts, the migrant crisis, or the recent economical downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Those events alone have had a major contribution to the decline of the European integrity.

For the consolidation, a survey conducted in May 2016 by ICM Research (“ICM Poll”) found that almost a third of the German population would vote for Germany’s exit from the EU, which shows that German citizens – the largest inhabitants of an EU state – are also skeptical regarding a united Europe, according to data from the official website of the European Union.

### ***The Revival of Geopolitics***

In order to impose their interests in geopolitical rivalries, the actors often find themselves in a permanent competition. By definition, the geopolitical space is usually a competitive one (*see* Tămaș, 1995, p. 62). However, this competition does not necessarily imply the adoption of aggressive, conflicting behaviours, as the use of force is considered a final straw in the process of promoting one’s own interests.

Given the aspects mentioned above, a geopolitical analysis of the current state of the United Kingdom is rather useful, in order to perceive the implication that a Member State’s withdrawal has, thus observing its avoidance of a potential decline in both political and social fields. It is also important to notice the measures one applies in order to manage such a transition, preventing any significant losses for any of the actors involved in the process.

### ***High Stakes***

The specific stakes of geopolitical actors are determined by their interests, adjusted in terms of the relationships established at a given time between the actors of the analyzed environment.

In terms of physical and geographical space, the boundaries are relatively clear, with territorial disputes usually involving neighbouring states or entities. In the case of “virtual” space, the situation is completely different: impressive volumes of information can be managed remotely. Supremacy is no longer gained in the battlefield, through military techniques, but rather acquired through policy-making processes, under peaceful methods.

As far as the territories are concerned, those that constitute the stake of power within the geopolitical approach after Brexit, are the following:

- (a) The United Kingdom;
- (b) Gibraltar;
- (c) Channel Islands and Isle of Man;
- (d) The Akrotiri and Dhekelia areas – sovereign military bases of the United Kingdom located in Cyprus;
- (e) Countries and territories having special relations with the United Kingdom: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Pitcairn, St Helena, The South Sandwich Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands (European Commission, 2018, pp 9-11).

Geopolitics’ aim is studying the power rivalries between the actors involved. Alongside disputes of interests, we are also able to notice convergences in interests, neutrality or indifference.

In this article, power refers to “the ability of an actor to change the policy of other states by coercion, domination and control, or by obtaining his consent” (Tămaș, 1995, p. 158, *our translation*).

### ***Interstate Conflicts Management***

When Britain withdrew from the European Union, its guidelines changed as well, so much so, that Germany became the main member of the European Union, followed by France, thus consolidating the continent’s position of power. The historical rivalry between the two states also affects their actions within the Union. Not allowing permission to shape a modern axis of power, with coherent and convergent actions, and requiring the permanent intervention of EU bodies to eliminate dissensions between the two powers. Furthermore, the British pride is an existing feeling across the Kingdom, especially within the House of Lords. Currently, the British geopolitical interest is completely nationalist (BBC News). Hence the decision of not wanting someone else in Brussels to prevent or favour the country or the choices of its potential competitors. Though it might seem pretentious, Britain has its well-founded reasons, for they would not accept to tie themselves to a geopolitical project that, to their consideration, is degrading (Friedman, 2018). Those factors, combined with the economic recession felt in France and the authorities’ imbalance in Germany could slow the national progresses, potentially leading to stagnation.



## **Potential Issues**

### ***Developmental Lassitude***

According to the Statista platform, there are over 447 million European citizens (Plecher, 2020), out of which many have migrated to the UK with hopes of a better life and consistent prosperity whether on their own or along with their families, given the labour movement permissiveness, and who now fear for their future and their rights. Companies can expect new trade barriers to arise and see their long-term plans hampered by the fact that they have no certainty about the future applicability of EU's legal law. Universities and educational institutions cannot assess whether cross-border research will continue and will be possible to the same extent and whether educational qualifications will continue to be recognized by the interstate parties in the future (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018). The European External Action Service and the European Defense Agency are also severely affected by Brexit, as the working relations between the European Union and the United States of America became more strained after the United Kingdom's departure from the Union. NATO is a representative of the alliance between Europe and the United States, but with Brexit and France's predominant role (Barigazzi, 2019), geopolitical approaches become more complicated and difficult between the two Global Powers.

### ***Eastern Backlash***

Another consequence of the change in the EU's centre of gravity is the rising status of the Member States in Central and Eastern Europe. For this study, the situation in Poland is analyzed. A strong advantage of Poland is its economic potential. Having an economic growth rate of 5.1% in 2018 according to the website [ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu), The Land of Fields ranked third among the Member States of the European Union (European Commission, 2019).

The members of Central and Eastern Europe have not held any dominant position, and their share in the decision-making process of the European Union is relatively low. Following the UK's departure from the Union, Poland believes that a new axis of power could be created in the European Union in the future (Xiaoquan, 2020, p. 1), featuring France and Germany. If this scenario were to come to fruition, the causes might represent a populist wave in Europe, with the far-right forces of many EU Member States disrupting the traditional political process. The opposition within the European Union could therefore be strengthened. As such, the expansion of the European Union and its developmental direction could become unclear.

### ***Economic Freeze***

Although the British government plans on dropping border checks on goods coming from the EU (initially scheduled to come into operation starting January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021) given the economical impact caused by the Coronavirus pandemic (The Guardian, 2020), it is still worth mentioning the possible consequences of a no-deal Brexit that could occur in the policies of the well-known trading partners of the United Kingdom:

In the rest of Europe, analysts predict that Germany, France and the Netherlands will suffer a large loss of workforce (Vandenbussche, 2019).

The importance of long time trade relations with automobiles, pharmaceutical and chemical products exported from Germany to the UK would lead to an instant decrease in revenue on the strength of Brexit.

For France, unemployment rates could have been a big hit to Emmanuel Macron's efforts to quell the so-called "yellow vest" protests movement.

The close trade ties between Britain and France, through the ports of Calais and Dover, could be plunged into chaos if improved border controls are implemented as a result of a Brexit without an agreement. From the public statements and interviews of Amélie de Montchalin, the French Minister for European Affairs, the argument that the cost of uncertainty is high can be extracted (Embassy of France to the United States, 2019). What is important is how the parties will work together on the future of the economic, academic, cultural, social, defense and security issues.

The Netherlands considers that the remaining 27 Member States must cover the gap left by the departure of the United Kingdom (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

The exact impact on Dutch public finances will depend on the negotiations between the UK and the EU during the transition period, which is set to run until December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, according to the Dutch Government's website (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

### **Conclusions**

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union – Brexit – has a significant impact on the balance of power in the EU, on US-European relations, as well as on Russian-European and US-Russian relations.

As for the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom is no longer the main based partner it was in the 1970s, being commercially overtaken by the United States, China or Germany. Other Commonwealth countries, such as India or Sri Lanka, are even afraid of the consequences of Brexit on their own economies.

Finally, the effective exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union would set a precedent. Any concessions obtained in London in the context of negotiations to leave the European Union (in terms of immigration

control and free movement of persons, for example) could be invoked by other states in the future, especially now when the issue of immigration is a matter of concern.

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# **The Commonwealth of Nations. A Brief Look at the Organization's Crisis Management Strategies**

**ANCUȚA ȘCHEUL<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Being the oldest international organization in existence, the British Commonwealth of Nations is unique in its formation process, solidarity of its members to each other and the issues of common concern that are addressed. As an international organization, the Commonwealth is not immune to challenges or critiques, but the way they are tackled is worth noting. Previous studies dedicated to the issue have shown that The Commonwealth of Nations is just a myth representing the Empire's new clothing, but recent events as the global pandemic have shown a totally different face of the association. This paper will analyse four ways in which crises have been overcome leading to the following outcome: The Commonwealth tends to be supportive of its members "for better or for worse".

**Keywords:** *Commonwealth, international organization, crisis, member states.*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain controlled the biggest Empire that the world had ever seen. In 1920, the Empire was at its peak and at the time nobody thought that this huge structure could ever collapse. But the end was near. Right after the Second World War, the Empire started to crumble as colonies began to fight for their independence and autonomy. But unlike other empires, the transition from empire to Commonwealth was smooth. After gaining their independence, states that had been part of the old empire, still wanted to be represented by the British Crown. Today, this international organisation, despite comprising a lot of small states and third world countries, is trying to act like one body, by helping each country to reach a level of stability. Every year, on 9 March, when the Commonwealth Day is celebrated, a passage from 1 Corinthians 12 is read. This passage describes in the best way possible what this organisation is intended to be:

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For the body is not one member but many. If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? (...) But now are they many members, yet but one body And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; no again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to the part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (Bible Gateway Passage).

From this passage we can only understand that every member of the Commonwealth is valuable for the organisation and the weaker states are better cared for. But whether this is actually the case and not just theory remains to be seen.

By using a qualitative approach, this article identifies the ways in which crises are addressed by the Commonwealth, giving special attention to the Covid-19 crisis from 2020. The first section presents a conceptual framework. In the following section, we shall briefly discuss some crises that have hit the organisation over the time. The third section systematically investigates the way in which the Commonwealth has dealt with the new pandemic. Finally, the conclusions summarize the key findings.

## **The Commonwealth of Nations**

There is no such thing as an official definition of the Commonwealth, but, according to the official website of this international organisation, The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal countries – with a total population of about 2 billion people that represents nearly one-third of the global population. The member governments have shared goals like development, democracy and peace. This organisation comprises 54 states. Commonwealth countries are diverse – they are amongst the world's biggest, smallest, richest and poorest countries. Member countries are also supported by a network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil, cultural and professional organisations (About us | The Commonwealth).

Although at a first glance this organisation seems to have a steady present and a bright future, several scholars say with regards to the history,

that the Commonwealth has lost its relevance and finds itself on the edge of collapse.

The author Krishnan Srinivasan, in the book *“The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth”*, says that if we look back in history, we see that

The modern post-Second World War Commonwealth was designed by the British political leadership to comfort those in Britain who keenly felt the loss of Empire, and to provide a surrogate for colonial rule: an instrument to replace the Empire with a British sphere of influence covering a quarter of the world's surface (...) The Commonwealth ceased to be ‘the British Commonwealth’ with the incorporation after the Second World War of sovereign, independent states that were members of the United Nations, and even more so with the establishment in 1965 of a multilateral Secretariat. But the organization continued to have a pronounced British stamp, Britain was the adhesive that held the membership together, and ‘the British Commonwealth’ became the customary appellation by which the body was known to people in countries outside the Commonwealth, and to many within it as well (Srinivasan, 2008, p. 1) .

During its early years, Srinivasan continues, the Commonwealth aroused “affection and admiration” but not long after, the organisation started to decline in significance “both for Britain and for the international community” (Srinivasan, 2008, p. 2).

Philip Murphy shares a similar point of view and his book *The Empire's New Clothes. The Myth of the Commonwealth* revolves around a central argument: Even if in the early years, the Commonwealth had a limited significance as an international organisation, today, the Commonwealth has lost almost all of it, and has become “something of a mirage in the British foreign policy”. He also continues on a little funny note, saying that to this argument an informed reader might respond, “And?”, while the slightly less informed might confess, “I didn't know the Commonwealth still existed” (Murphy, 2018, p. ix).

Looking at these arguments, one might think that it is futile to discuss about this marginal organisation and organisations like the European Union (EU) or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) deserve more attention. This kind of narrative led to a gap in the literature about the Commonwealth. This paper comes to meet this issue, by addressing it in a different way that the ones we have seen before.

## **Dealing with Crises**

One cannot accurately determine whether the Commonwealth is irrelevant or if it is significant these days until one looks at the actions that

are being taken by this organisation. If we look at the Commonwealth social media (such as Instagram or Tweeter) or the official website, we are welcomed by a series of dazzling laudable hashtags like #humanrihts, #education, #trade, #genderequality, #smallstates, #peace, #fight\_climate\_change. Looking at these words one can wonder “What’s not to like?” (Murphy, 2018). The real issue here is if these hashtags describe indeed a reality or are being used just as slogans to attract followers or to put the working royals who tour the Commonwealth in a good light. To test these assumptions, we must look at the real crises that kneeled this organisation such as, terrorist attacks or natural disasters.

In “Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018”, a programme for assistance initiated by the Australian government, it is written that the Commonwealth will send aid to states in need only if the disaster is an “eligible” one. This category includes only natural disasters such as earthquakes, bushfires, tsunamis, or if there is a terrorist attack. There are different types of steps and measures that must be taken into consideration if the state wants to receive aid for reconstruction. But setting aside all this bureaucracy, we should look at some specific situations in which we would expect the Commonwealth to intervene. For this analysis we will choose two recent events that caught the world’s attention.

The first disaster that we should look at is the terrorist attack from Christchurch, New Zealand. On 15 March 2019, forty-nine people were killed and 48 wounded in shootings at two mosques in Christchurch. A gunman identifying himself as an Australian live-streamed the rampage at Al Noor mosque on Facebook. He had espoused racist, anti-immigrant views. (“New Zealand Mosque Shootings Kill 49”, 2019). The international community reacted right away, strongly condemning the terrorist act and the hatred of people of other religions. In a situation like this we would expect the Commonwealth to act accordingly and to help the country to recover by increasing the security and by helping families of those involved in the attack. But we could not find a single mention on the Commonwealth website or social media about the aid given by this organisation to their member state. One could only find an article about the condolences sent by the Secretary-General with the following mention “On behalf of the Commonwealth family I convey my deepest sympathy to the people of New Zealand and to all those directly affected by the appalling acts of hate-fuelled violence that have been inflicted on the community in Christchurch. We salute the emergency services and all who are working to deal with the aftermath of this outrage” (*Commonwealth Secretary-General expresses condolences in wake of New Zealand attack* | *The Commonwealth*). But in situations like this we cannot

help but ask ourselves: Is it enough, when tragedies like this occur, to only express condolences?

Another unfortunate event happened in Australia starting with December 2019 and continuing until February 2020. Record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought have fuelled a series of massive bushfires across Australia (“Australia Fires”, 2020). The death toll rose to more than 33 people (Henriques-Gomes, 2020). In a situation like this, the Secretary-General transmitted again the deepest condolences and added also that the “Commonwealth collectively recognises that without well-planned and integrated national and international action, natural disasters and extreme events will continue to challenge the resilience of affected communities and smaller countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat is working alongside member nations to protect the environmental health of fragile and susceptible ecosystems, including through increased national preparedness for tackling natural disasters and mobilising resources” (*Extreme Events Are Reversing Development Goals | The Commonwealth*). This kind of resources are mentioned in a report written on the official website of the Prime Minister of Australia, regarding the National Bushfire Recovering. The document states that “when the rebuilding begins, the Commonwealth will be there to make sure communities are well-resourced”. It also says that the Commonwealth has committed to give \$86 million for the recovery (*National Bushfire Recovery Agency | Prime Minister of Australia*).

So, we have seen a positive and a negative example of the Commonwealth implication in giving aid to the members in need. But to establish which is the rule and which is the exception we must look at the way the new crisis that struck the world was tackled by the Commonwealth.

### **The Challenges of the Year 2020. The Commonwealth against Covid-19**

The Covid-19 virus spread fast around the globe without taking into account that wealth is unequally distributed between states. The Commonwealth created a Response Centre to help its member states to manage this crisis. Within this centre, valuable information is provided to assist the member countries in combating the pandemic (*Commonwealth Coronavirus Response Centre | The Commonwealth, f.a.*). Among many articles that announce conferences about what should be done, we find that the Commonwealth acts in supporting its member states. One of the important measures is called “*Pro bono Law Response Initiative*”:

This scheme aims to help member countries steer through measures that will protect businesses and economies which are facing up to the enormous financial consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak. In collaboration with



international law firms Slaughter & May and Milbank LLP, a team of specialists has been assembled to help countries review their laws and regulations. Lawyers involved in the initiative will work pro bono as they carry out in-depth research and recommend proposed legislative changes where countries have expressed a need. They will liaise with experts in-country to ensure advice is tailored to domestic legal frameworks (*Pro bono legal support to help developing countries through Covid-19 crisis | The Commonwealth*).

An initiative like this has an enormous value in such trying times. And we can say that in this case, we can observe that the Commonwealth is really trying to be one body as it stated. We have seen many countries being on the verge of collapse even though they had resources and the means to fight a virus like this (as we have seen in Italy). But because of poor leadership and lack of strict regulation, the situation could not be handled as it should have been. And we can observe that the Commonwealth has prevented this kind of scenario in an admirable way, especially by ensuring that the advice they give is suitable for the domestic laws of a certain country. This was much needed because even though the Commonwealth countries are all democracies, they are still truly diverse in terms of domestic policies. For example, in countries like Pakistan, religion plays an important role, even in politics, and every given law must be in accordance with the laws of Islam (*Islam and Politics in Pakistan*, 2011). Another example is given by African countries, which unfortunately have a remarkably high corruption index (*Corruption Rank – Countries – List | Africa*). So, in this case, any law that is given must be made for the common good and not for the politicians and their interest.

Another program that makes a difference in dark days like this is “*Protecting school feeding programmes to support children during Covid-19*”. The Commonwealth contains several third world countries and in states like this, attending school is the only way for children to eat a warm meal. With schools being closed because of Covid-19, children are in danger of starvation, and a malnourished body is more likely to be prone to contacting the virus. An article published by the Commonwealth Coronavirus Response Centre states that:

The School Feeding Programme is used across the world to protect some of the most vulnerable children, alleviating short-term hunger, improving nutrition and cognition of children and transferring income to families. In some poor households, it represents about 10 per cent of their monthly income. Across the Commonwealth, we have great examples of school feeding programmes offering a lifeline for poor and marginalised children and those in remote areas. They provide free food grains, nutritionally balanced meals and innovations such as digital school meal planners (*Protecting school feeding programmes to support children during Covid-19 | The Commonwealth*).

An initiative like this makes us indeed believe that within the Commonwealth “if one member suffers, all members suffer with it”.

Surprisingly, in times of hardship, when even the European Union was accused of not being by the side of its members (“Coronavirus Outbreak Eats into EU Unity”, 2020), the Commonwealth, even if it has fewer resources, is ready to do something even as small as this programs for the wellbeing of its citizens.

## Conclusions

The Commonwealth is far from being a perfect organisation. It struggled with lack of relevance and meaning and oftentimes it does not take action when it is expected. We have seen bad examples of intervention and good examples of action taken in times of crisis. But it has always shown that it is ready to work hard and improve. All this makes us conclude that even if it does not always succeed, the Commonwealth tends to be alongside its members for better or for worse.

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